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ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND

Vol. 12-#1-Issue 67-December/January 2016

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Aetherion

Interview by Michael F. Carnage

Aetherion is a four-piece, Victoria-based metal band that's been banging around for about a year and a half now, slowly forming their own style and getting some experience on the stages around town. They've been playing the usual mix of local shows with all the other local metal bands, and are now gearing up to release an album before the end of the year. I hear they have a lot of other new shit coming up, so I got some questions put together. Here's what Jesse "Junk" Turner had to say:

Absolute Underground: To start it off, how about an intro to the band, who are you? How long have you been around?

Jesse Turner: Well, there's Nicolas Morrison-Barter who plays a mean guitar, Liam "Crunch" Harlow who blasts and beats the drums, Jared Gafter who shreds the bass and I play guitar and vocalize. The band started up about a year and a half ago and was originally named Chernabog. It all started with the former drummer, vocalist and I nailing out songs and eventually finishing the lineup with Nick and his brother James, and started playing shows until we were forced to mutate into the mythological beast we are now.

AU: With the new songs coming out, who shares in the writing?

JT: So far I've laid down the basis for the songs and everyone has written their own parts, very well I might add, and helps me finish writing them. This will change, of course, once we start writing new material, because now we can focus and utilize all aspects of our writing styles; we plan on getting more and more technical as we go. I want us to eventually share the leads, rhythms and the mic more and more down the road. You heard it here first, folks, and you can hold me to that.

AU: What's your greatest inspiration?

JT: Nick's would be Death; Liam's, White Chapel; Jared's, Pantera; and mine's Gojira. It may vary here and there from time to time, but that's what keeps things fresh and interesting, and why our music so far has many different sounds. Our inspirations come from all over the map, but the sheer brutality of heavy metal brought us all together. The positive reactions from the crowd are what we strive for and feed off of because we aim to please and we have Canada in our crosshairs. Pun intended.

AU: What's the best show you've played in the last year?

JT: Actually our last show at the Cambie was the best because people were more warmed up to us by then; we played to our biggest crowd and they seemed to dig us. Plus, we got to play with some great bands from Nanaimo, Vancouver and here in Victoria. Our first show was in my living room and had a pretty big turnout. I think more house party shows need to happen... just saying.

AU: Have you ever thought of leaving Victoria?

JT: To the ends of the earth we will go, if we must! We would start off with Vancouver though, if it came down to it.

AU: What do you guys have going on this winter?

JT: We're going to be recording our EP with Noel Anstey from Scimitar in January, having a release show and we'll go from there. We may have an epic show lined up for February... follow us on our Facebook page to keep updated with all the latest Aetherion news and support your underground scene! (Shout out to you guys here at Absolute for keeping it real).



AU: What's your favourite road food?

JT: The souls of the innocent taste better than condemned souls, but both suffice when you're on the road... beef jerky and A&W are always good, as well.

AU: What would be your dream show?

JT: Wacken Open Air for sure, especially 'cause we'll be entering the Wacken Metal Battle coming up in the summer and we have our eyes on the prize. Armstrong Festival would be great, too... any festival would be great actually, because of

the atmosphere and the mass amounts of metal fans and bands. Can't go wrong there, and if you play a festival, you gotta be doing something right. I'd also like to plan a tour to play the nine circles of Hell, but that's just me.

AU: Now is your chance to shamelessly promote yourself:

JT: We have big plans for the future and plan on going full force after recording. All the bands here

are connected in some way or another and are usually on good terms, which is how it should be. We're thinking the EP should be "sprung" forth soon enough, and get the ball rolling for the summer. We hope to see you soon. Stay metal!

www.facebook.com/Aetherion

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Ape War

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Ape War: We're all here!

Woody (vocals): Swimming hammered in an Arctic lake, then sitting on the lakeshore soaking to see how many mosquitos can bite me as a test of my Canadian mettle. Yep, it's all recorded, we used it for a video for "Horde" on the last record.

and mangling covers. We added John in the summer of 2011, and then we started to try to keep some of the good parts of jams instead of just messing around. Since it was so hard to get together with any regularity, we decided on the rule that no

Tom (drums) sweats a lot and breaks a lot of cymbals.

AU: Who else is in the band? Any previous bands of note?

AW: Woody was in Cokesnake and Demonskull - awesome if you were ever lucky enough to see either one, everyone else has been in various bands over the years. Chris (bass) and John (guitar) have been in lots of bands over the years, nothing that anyone would know.

AU: Give us a brief band history. When did you get started? What was the genesis of the band?

AW: Started in 2011, Chris, Jason, Mark and Dan mucking around for fun at Faceplant. Friends from ECCIAD having some beers

song can be too complicated or long that just practicing together once per month couldn't get said song tight. So that's where our style of keeping things distilled right down to the essence came from. We don't repeat verse / chorus / verse, blah, blah, just because that's what's expected in rock; when a riff has made its impact, that's all you get - no filler. It's for your own good. Anyway, Dan quit because he was in too many bands, Mark left for school, so we brought in Tom to drum and just kept it as a four-piece from there. The energy changed, we focused and started making some of our best stuff with this lineup.

AU: What's the meaning behind the band's name?

AW: We were in Faceplant jamming in the big room when we looked out the windows and noticed pillars of black smoke rising from the downtown core. So we dropped everything thinking there was some kind of explosion and went in to the hang-out room to look at the news on the computer, and saw the footage of herds of face-painted Neanderthals, high-fiving



and flashing their stupid brohammer thumb-out devil horns in front of burning cars and smashed windows - the hockey riots - and Jason said, "that looks like a fucking ape war."

AU: Bands seem to come and go, but Ape War is still givin' er. What do you attribute the band's longevity to?

AW: Quality, not quantity. We try to focus on and play a few energetic, explosive, 100% shows. So we're going full blast as well as we can. Most of us are old and we have conserve our loads. As far as writing, we're only making songs we all like, so there are none of those where you know one of the bandmates hates playing it but just powers through. We all have to like our parts, or we don't play it, so we don't resent each other. We don't force it, you don't wanna rip your ass. [We] really respect each others' schedules... Playing with bands outside your genre seems good for getting more show offers. Oh, and not being assholes.

AU: Describe your sound for the deaf people reading this.

AW: Whatever non-sound-based activity someone deaf uses to get pumped to face and triumph over bullshit is what we sound like. "Flip your desk, quit your shitty job and go live free" sounds. Brutal. Fast. Heavy. Chaotic.

AU: What are you guys trying to say with your music?

AW: It seems like whether it's fantasy- or more politics-based, all of our songs seem to come down to massive forces relentlessly imposing their wills and crushing whatever stands in the way. This is observed from either side, but usually from the futile side, usually with the loser having false hope in something that inevitably can't save them. It's not an intentional theme, it just happens to kinda all tie together. Basically, dogma is shit. That all sounds so pedestrian high-school nihilist, ha! We're actually all pretty happy dudes. I think that's what tempers it, the actual sound and live show is good times.

AU: What is the current state of the Vancouver music scene? Any other shredding bands we should know about?

AW: In one hand, really strong. So much good stuff. We've had a great time playing with What's Wrong Tohei, Get Over It, Futur Tits, Nightterrors, Burning Ghats, Waingro... all great Vancouver

VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

bands to check out. Basically, keep an eye on promoters Art Signified's Facebook page for the best in local heavy stuff that's usually got a unique twist to it. Get out there and support local music! The only weird thing is there isn't much of an all-ages scene anymore... The city has systematically shut down one underground venue after the other. And community centres don't do punk shows anymore... I don't know how today's youth are seeing punk and metal shows. I hope it's so underground and grassroots that I just don't even know about it because I'm too old to trust, ha. Or maybe it's just not cool anymore. I hope I'm way off base about this.

AU: Tell us about your latest release.

AW: *This is Fucked*, recorded live off the floor at Rain City Recorders in one day. We choose to record live to keep things really raw and energetic. (Full disclosure; we doubled a guitar – posers). We're afraid we'd lose our driving punch if we were in booths, or sitting on comfy couches, punching in. The vinyl comes with some stickers

and a zine of photos and artwork. It all came out really nicely. Tracks are free on Bandcamp, record is a mere \$5 from Audiopile, Red Cat, Neptoon, or straight from us. And if you're in the UK, Yamabushi Recordings Distro carries it, too. (Yamabushi is putting out so much shitkicker stuff right now). So it's a good evolution, it sounds better and is more interesting than our previous records.

AU: What are some of songs about?

AW: There are seven tracks, ranging from a 30-second street punk ripper to a 2.5 minute doom track, with lots of crusty thrashy stuff in between. Songs are about complacency and messed up priorities, about being dropped into a frozen lake by a high-flying witch who you accidentally disturbed, about running out of resources in the name of false gods, about what it would feel like being a buffalo being stampeded off a cliff, about how there's dickheads everywhere and fuck them!

AU: What can the people expect from your live show?

AW: A lot of energy, we all work hard. Tom is on the verge of puking after every show. We try to bring a lot of intensity. Usually Woody's right in the crowd right away. Beer cans fly, we trip and fall over stuff/each other. We don't mind some chaos. We like floor shows so the chaos of the audience can overlap with ours. We perform best when the wheels are just about to shoot off...

AU: Is it best to get drunk or stoned before taking in your show?

AW: Bit of both is pretty nice. Do what you gotta do to loosen up, just don't turn into a fucking moron.

AU: Tell us something you don't want your mother to know.

AW: I play in a punk / metal band that has lyrics with swear words!

AU: Final words?

AW: FUUUUCK SHIIIIIT UUUUUUP (NICELY)

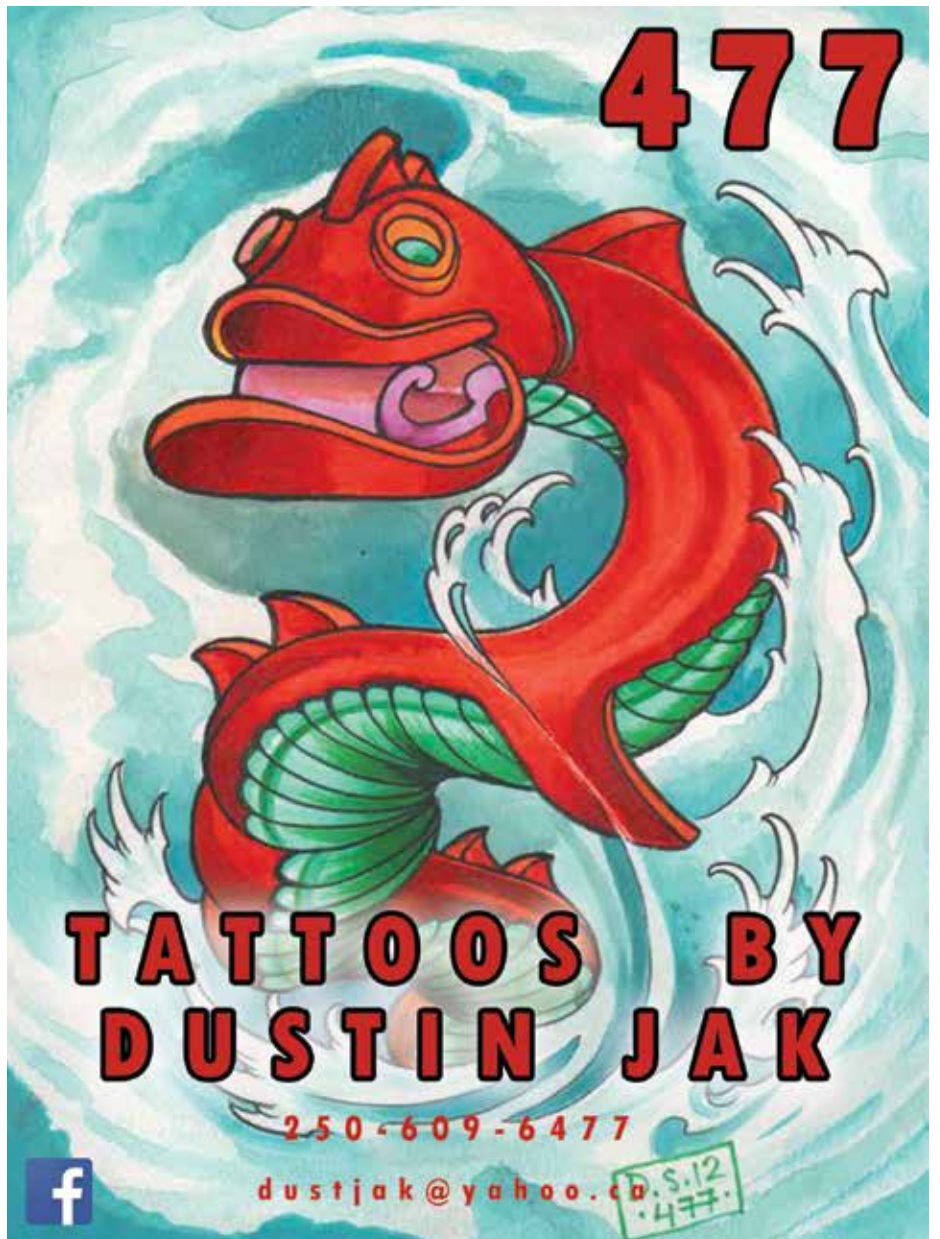
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PHOTO CREDIT: Scott D. Hemenway





Striker

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Hey Striker! What's the word? Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Tim Brown: You are talking to Tim, from Striker! We are most infamous for drinking beer and breaking shit while unleashing a tsunami of the New Wave of Heavy Metal across the Universe!

AU: You're releasing a new album, *Stand in the Fire*, this February, and from my understanding, this is your first time releasing an album completely independently, correct? What prompted this decision?

TB: Evolve or die! The music industry is in a state of upheaval, transitioning from the old traditional method of selling physical units on a label to new independent digital distribution methods. The old style of signing your life away to a label just doesn't work anymore. More and more frequently, there are huge success stories of bands going independent and embracing new technologies and ways of doing things. Our friends in Protest the Hero, for example, went independent and did crowdfunding for their last album, and it exploded. Why give away everything to a label

when you can do it yourself? We want to be able to tour and record new albums, and you simply can't do that sustainably on a label these days. Eat or be eaten! **AU: You recorded and mixed the new record all at home, what was that process like? Did it change or affect how you wrote and created together as a group?**

TB: Recording at home really allowed us a lot of flexibility in writing and arranging. Normally at a good studio you are paying serious cash, and every second counts.

You don't really have the freedom to experiment and try strange things like you would at home where no one is on the clock, and you can take as long as you want. This record has some really great arrangements, some really great "producer moments," as I like to call them, which we were only able to do because we could work on the music for months at a time. Since we were at home, we could also call upon our friends to help us out, for example, our friend Jonny McCormack came and did saxophone for us on the track "Out for Blood," which is our cop drama song, and basically the most over-the-top tune I think we've ever done.

AU: Finally, tell us about the new album itself! What can we expect to hear? You released a single already, "Too Late," how's the reception been?

TB: The reception has been great! The song is available as a free download on our website www.striker-metal.com for the duration of the pre-order campaign for our new album, which ends on December 10. This album is completely over-the-top, we went totally balls-out with this one. Normally after recording an album, I'm totally burnt out on the music. With *Stand in the Fire*, I've been listening to it every day since we got the final master back a few months ago; it gets me

lit! This is the New Wave of Heavy Metal. Surf's up.

AU: You guys launched a pretty massive pre-order campaign in November... tell us about it!

TB: You can pre-order a Striker keg party show to your basement... how's that? Haha! We have lots of crazy perks like the keg party, or choosing a song for us to cover for a bonus track. Ultimately, a band should be humbled when someone takes the time to give you their hard-earned money because they believe in you and your product, but we really wanted to make sure that contributors got something worthwhile with their money... Every single person who contributes to our pre-order gets their name in the album, forever, we will sign absolutely anything you want, and everyone gets a free digital download of the album. All of the items are limited strictly to the pre-order, and the CD and vinyl covers are special foil/shiny editions. They have limited edition artwork as well that you aren't going to see anywhere else!

AU: 2016 sees you booked for a ton of tour dates... are there any special or new locations that you're particularly looking forward to playing?

TB: As of right now, we are booked for two European tours, a South American tour, and a North American tour, all in the first eight of months in 2016, and the album hasn't even been released yet! We are also working on going to Japan and Australia, and are hoping to play over 200 shows in 2016. The album launches on February 5, 2016, with a European tour with Primal Fear, one of our favourite bands. We are really excited to do Mexico and South America since we have never been there, and the crowds there are huge! The European festival circuit is an absolute blast! And, of course, my absolute favourite; IHOP and Chipotle in the USA.

AU: What else does the New Year have in store for Striker? Anything you're particularly excited about or looking forward to?

TB: We have been working on this album for

SHR-EDMONTON

almost a year, and finally getting it out there will be one hell of a release! We are working harder than ever to book more shows and elevate our show to new levels. We want to be the best metal band out there, bar none, and have been improving every aspect of the band. We love being on tour, and being able to string together multiple tours is an amazing feeling. If anything, I know we are all looking forward to meeting new friends and the stories we can tell after this album cycle finishes!

AU: What are your long-term goals? What does the future hold for you as a group?

TB: One thing we really want to do is to help usher in a new era for the music industry. Going independent has been the best thing that ever happened to us, and we want to help show all the other bands out there the path... Once the music industry reorganizes itself to properly incorporate modern digital technology, there will be a huge resurgence of great music.

As for Striker, we are already looking forward to our next album. We want to take a totally new approach to releasing music that is unseen in rock and heavy music, and to take ourselves to the next level. We are going to take the idea of rock and heavy music and really turn it on its head. So many bands are concerned about being "old school," and looking back to the glory days of metal in the 80s. We want to leave that all behind and do something totally different and new.

AU: What else should we know about Striker? Any final words for the readers of Absolute Underground?

TB: Fun Fact: Our new song, "Out for Blood," is based off of the McBain movie from the first few seasons of the Simpsons!

Good times with bad friends, I'll drink to that!

www.striker-metal.com/

PHOTO CREDIT: Dana Zuk

Hansom Jeff



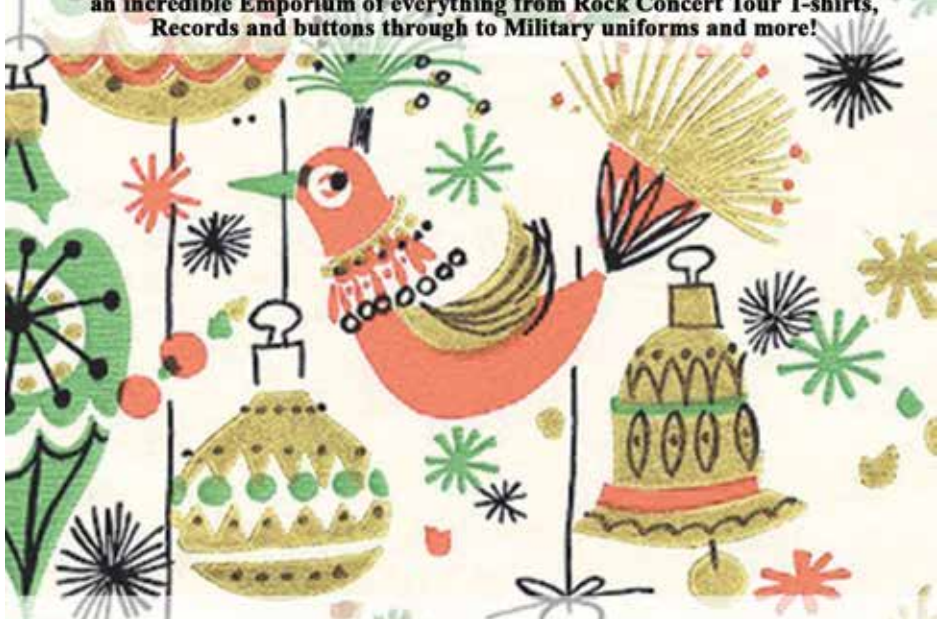
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Return of the Leech Just Wants to Give You the Creeps

By Chris Walter & J.B.

Return of the Leech is a rock band from Edmonton, Alberta. Influenced by early punk, surf, horror, and rock n' roll, Return of the Leech has created a distinct and unique sound that will be sure to turn some heads. Formed in Vancouver B.C. in 2011, with Johnny Bandura on guitar and vocals, and Cheese Bread on drums, the ex-members of experimental hardcore punk act Sip Yek Nom are here to bring something old-yet-new to the



punk genre. With songs featuring 50s horror movie monsters and D-List comic book heroes, Return of the Leech will grow on you like some mutant fungus from outer space, and beer is the only cure.

Having drained Vancouver of swamp juice, Return of the Leech relocated to Edmonton, Alberta, where they recorded their first full-length album, *Escape from the Swamp*, at Danlyn Studios. Talented but psychotic Tyler P joined the group shortly after the first show, which took place on April 16th, 2015 at The Buckingham, with long-time friends and allies Abandon All Hope. As the New Year approaches, the band is gearing up for more performances, not only in Alberta, but for several Stateside shows as well. Don't miss Return of the Leech when

they hit your town.

A second album, *Dominate the Cesspool*, is currently in the works, and the new single "Outta My Head" is receiving air play on more than thirty radio stations worldwide. Return of the Leech will be the feature group for the month of December on KDKT Rock Radio, so make sure to keep your ears open for them.

For all updates and links, discerning punk/horror buffs can find us at <https://www.facebook.com/returnoftheleech>



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MONTREAL MASSACRE



Evertrapped

Interview by Andre Laniel

Absolute Underground: Who's in the band?

Evertrapped: The current lineup is Fred Dupuis and Vincent Benoit on guitars, John Yates on bass, Eric Lemire on drums and James Brookes on vocals.

AU: Tell us about the band; how did it all start?

Evertrapped: It started back in 2007, mostly with Eric and Fred getting back together, seeing as how they had already played together previously. The first release, *Tales From The Supermax* (2010) actually had another bassist and vocalist. However, the sound of the band changed dramatically once we got to the point we're at now, so on *The Anomaly* (2012), four tracks from the previous album actually got redone with our new sound and line-up. We felt we had properly

established ourselves as a band at that point, which allowed us to create *Under The Deep* (2015), which consists of only brand-new songs.

AU: How would you describe your sound to someone that doesn't know you?

Evertrapped: We classify our music as melodic death metal. That's really the closest classification we were able to put together. Some would probably call it more technical death, and frankly either one would more or less be accurate. It's just really angry, fast-paced metal. There are elements from a variety of brands of metal, but it still remains our own signature sound.

AU: What inspires the band?

Evertrapped: As expected, each member has too many influences to name. However, in terms

of the musical side of it all, Fred is the main songwriter. There's a heavy influence from bands along the lines of At The Gates, Arch Enemy, Unearth, Black Dahlia Murder and so on... that actually can be said for the songwriting as well as the mixing and mastering process, since our albums are all self-produced.

AU: Was there a theme to your latest album, *Under The Deep*?

Evertrapped: It's heavily based on the unending despair of humanity. The title *Under The Deep* signifies that there are always further depths of darkness, madness and filth that can be reached, and with that, there's no real point in trying to claw your way out of it because we're all hilariously screwed, no matter what.

AU: Were there any songs left out of the album?



Evertrapped: Honestly, Fred writes so much music that it's not so much that there were songs left out, but sometimes a new finished song will have parts from an old song we never did anything with, or even the opposite could apply. Fred has such

a huge bank of songs and riffs that there's never really anything left out, the songs are simply the results of stuff written over the course of an undetermined period of time.

AU: How do you compare this album to your previous release?

Evertrapped: There are actually a variety of similarities in terms of the overall compositions, since we believe that we really found our signature sound on *The Anomaly*. However, *Under The Deep* is like the previous album's pissed-off older brother. The production level has matured, but the songs are just so angry and more brutal compared to *The Anomaly*.

AU: Do you have a video coming up for the album?

Evertrapped: We are currently finishing up a self-made promo video for "Lethal District." The main video for the new album is "Underneath The Deep," which came out earlier this year. We also recently put out another self-made promo video for "Embrace The End."

AU: Are you planning a tour to promote the album?

Evertrapped: We are; however the official dates have not been released yet. We should be starting in early 2016. When everything has been officially planned, the masses shall be informed!

AU: Will we be able to see you play a festival?

Evertrapped: We hope so! Doing festivals is really fun! Once the complete tour schedule comes out, we'll have a better idea of what's in store for everyone in terms of shows.

AU: Any new songs that we will hear in your live show?

Evertrapped: "Lethal District" will be the next one coming up off the new record that we have not played live yet. We are really excited to perform it. It sounds great!!

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PHOTO CREDIT: Luc Delorme

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10 STAB TWIST PULL PLAUGE BRINGER RIPPER ALLEY	11 TRITON JUNKIES RUSH SENTIENT SET & STONED EVEN EFFECT	12 AUTHORITY ZERO VERSUS THE WORLD PERV CORE COMING OUT SWINGING
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24 CLOSED	25 CLOSED	26 CLOSED
31 NEW YEARS CALGARY BEER CORE PRESENTS PUNK VS METAL 10 BANDS		27 SUNDAY EMPTY VISIONARIES REDRESS BLACKWELLS ISLAND SONDER ABSTRACT ASYLUM

JANUARY

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 NOPE!!	2 DISTORTION UNPLUGGED OPEN JAM
7 TBA	8 ASTRONAUTS AMB TRIO OUTLETS BAND BLACKBIRD ELCTRIC	9 HAZZARDOUS MATERIAL BURLESQUE TRAIN BIGGER MONKEYS KREPITUS THE ARCHON PROPHECY
14 FOLD LAUNCH PARTY	15 THE RHINESTONE AFFAIR	16 RAMPAGE CRYSTAL MESS SAVAGE HENRY THE SICKOS PERV CORE
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KABUKI GUNS BURLESQUE - BINSKI DANCERS
- 08 DIATESSARON ALBUM RELEASE
- 14 FAKE MUSTACHE
- 15 NORE
- 16 WOOHOO! SIMPSONS TRIVIA
- 16 HANG THE DJ
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- 19 CAFE ABSINTHE
- 21 DEAD OF WINTER HIGH VOLTAGE VARIETY HOUR
THE MISUSED + ALICE ASPHYXIA + HARLEY PAGE + LUNA LOVELESS + IVY VOLTAGE
- 23 STRIKER ALBUM RELEASE
- 29 ONYX
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Waingro

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Brian Sepanzyk: Hello, my name is Brian. I once drunkenly told that guy from *Road House* he was washed up and called him the C-word. It's not something I'm particularly proud of.

AU: How did the three of you meet and form Waingro?



BS: Cosmic forces beyond our control. That, and mutual friends.

AU: Can you describe your music, for those of us that haven't had the pleasure of hearing it yet?

BS: Heavy desert rock with a murderous cult influence.

AU: You guys are known for a polished brand of heavy music, with a very cohesive live show and an outstanding self-titled debut... you've shared the stage with some pretty big names like Fu Manchu and later this month sees you opening for Black Breath. How do you feel about your progress as a band thus far? Any favourite moments from the last year you care to share with us?

BS: Fu Manchu was a big one. This band started because of a Fu Manchu song, so that was everything coming full circle for us. We feel very fortunate to have anybody give a shit about our music and it's allowed us some great opportunities and the scene here in Vancouver has been a big part of that. Touring with Baptists and Sumac, we had some pretty amazing shows as well. Even though it was all different styles of music, it was with all great people so it became these really cool shows.

AU: You've just released your second album, *Mt. Hood*, how do you feel it compares with last year's release? A one year gap between albums is impressive - Did you already have most of the songs ready to go?

BS: We feel like this is a great continuation from our first LP. We started writing as soon as we finished recording, and it wasn't because we felt the need to start right away, but the songs kept coming so we just went with it. It was a lot of fun. I think once we got the first batch out, we just kept that going and we had more than enough for another album, so we just went for it.

AU: You hashed out the body of the record at a cabin on Galiano Island, is that right? How did that affect the writing/recording process?

BS: That was cool because we wanted to polish up what we had and just go work on the songs without distraction. Plus, changing the setting was a great way to get a new perspective on the songs. It was awesome to be playing tunes in a beautiful cabin overlooking the ocean instead of in a smoky, closed-in jam space. Unfortunately, the whole island could hear us, so it was cut

short, but that was after 11 hours of jamming, so we did alright.

AU: Did you do anything very differently this time around with regards to recording? *Mt. Hood* is a Jesse Gander release out of Rain City Records, correct? How was the whole process?

BS: Yeah, Jesse was kind enough to fit us into his schedule again. This time was great, as we were more familiar with working with each other and we knew what we wanted to do differently on this record. It was fun to go in knowing what worked, and then trying something new within that. We really stuck to the live-off-the-floor method, including guitar solos, so that was a lot of fun and terrifying at the same time. We played around with more improvisation this time around, as well.

AU: *Mt. Hood* is the name of a stratovolcano in northern Oregon... what's the significance?

BS: Aside from an ominous title, it was a series of weird occurrences where I would end up seeing that name a lot when I was searching things out. I ended up on articles for it numerous times and the name really resonated with me. But the kicker was when I found out the exterior shot used for the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* was the Timberline Lodge, which is on top of Mt Hood. Then there was no question.

AU: You've mentioned the colours of *Mt. Hood's* striking cover art were actually carefully selected - how and why did you choose them?

BS: As with the first record, I gave Cole [Benoit] a general idea and sent him a colour palette to work with that was derived from old boogie vans from the 70s. We love the colours that were standard back then. It's what I picture as a continual aesthetic for this band.

AU: You guys recently shot a music video at an underground space in Vancouver - how was the shoot? When can we see the video?

BS: The shoot was amazing. We got a lot of our good buds involved and shot it at our friend's art space, the Salmon Derby, which has been a central hangout for a lot of us, so it was great to incorporate that with everybody in the video. Three-day shoot and building sets for one minute, 35 seconds of footage. Gotta love it.

AU: What are your plans for the next year? Do you have another album in the works already?

BS: We're going to head out and promote this album as best we can. We figure we can hold off on another record... for now.

AU: What should we know about Waingro that we don't already? Any final words for the readers of *Absolute Underground*?

BS: Benjie, our drummer, hates cucumbers.

<https://waingro.bandcamp.com/>

PHOTO CREDIT: Cole Benoit

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December Fest VII

By Ashley Frierichs

DECEMBER 11th & 12th

The Rickshaw Theatre,
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Chatting with Vancouver promoter Johnny Matter (Apocalypse Sunrise) at an East Van coffee shop about December Fest was one of the most refreshing conversations I've had in a while. In this crazy industry, it's so nice to see people working hard, while also managing to give back to the community. It's not easy to figure out how exactly we can use our skills, knowledge and resources to do something good – and Johnny's got it figured out.

Seven years ago, he put on his very first show in Vancouver. He had a vision to showcase the talent in the underground hardcore metal/punk scene, and to do it in more of a "festival-style" format. As such, he booked a few of the scene's heavy hitters at Pat's Pub. Some of the bands were just starting out - it was one of Burning Ghats' very first shows. He took the risk and made the investment himself to make sure everyone had a good time and that all the bands got paid. And the rewards made it worth it; the show was such a success that they had to move the next year's December Fest to a much bigger venue - the Rickshaw Theatre. Johnny lit up when he talked about it: "Going from playing in the pub down the street to the big venue, it was pretty magical."

He said that he soon decided he "wanted to do a little more and give back to his community in some way." His projects were starting to gain steam and he said he wanted to find a way to share the wealth. This is the time of year it really seems to hit us that there are so many people in Vancouver who are cold and hungry – so what better way to truly give back to our community than to make sure people get fed by donating to the Vancouver Food Bank?

Seven years later and still rocking strong, December Fest goes down once again at the Rickshaw Theatre on Friday, December 11th and Saturday, December 12th. To attend both nights and see 14 bands total, it's only \$20. Please bring food donations and make sure to buy raffle and 50/50 tickets – because on top of the food donations, all of the proceeds from raffle and 50/50 tickets are going straight to the cause as well.



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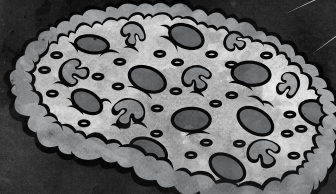
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Metaspherical

Interview with Jason Morley
By AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: This project, which encompasses musicians from all around the world, is a huge undertaking. What was the impetus behind putting together such a project?

Jason Morley: Well, at the time, a few years ago now, I was just getting back into playing metal after a long break, due to a severe injury I sustained. I live in a small city on Vancouver Island and couldn't find the kind of musicians to help me create the type of music I was envisioning.

AU: Can you list some of the musicians involved, for those are unfamiliar with Metaspherical's lineup?

JM: Some of the more recognized players include Gene Hoglan (Testament/Dethklok/Dark Angel),



Andy LaRocque (King Diamond/Death), Kelly Shaefer (Atheist/Neurotica), Tony Choy (Atheist/Cynic) Dan Mongrain (Voivod/Martyr), Virgil Donati (Steve Vai/Planet-X), John Longstreth (Origin), The Heathen (Zimmer's Hole/West Of Hell), as well as many more unknown players from different parts of the world who all bring aspects of their varying unique talents to the table.

AU: Tell us about the music itself. What can we expect to hear from the debut album, and when might we expect to hear it?

JM: The goal with the music itself has been to bring together aspects of many of the classic sub-genres, ie thrash/death/progressive/power/traditional, and create a sound that can represent these genres together with some level of continuity. Plans are in the works to have something out by late spring of next year.

AU: You released a single, "Cloth of Ought To," in September, how's the reception been?

JM: The reception has been very overwhelming thus far, and it keeps me motivated to get more music out and to take it on the road next year.

AU: This project sees Gene Hoglan playing with Andy LaRocque for the first time since Death... what significance does this hold for them as musicians and for the group as a whole?

JM: To me, personally, as a fan, having Hoglan and LaRocque on board is an honour beyond words. The Death album *Individual Thought Patterns* was one of the most influential records to my playing whilst growing up as a teenager. I can't really say what significance it holds for either of them personally, but in terms of the project as a whole it brought some amazing playing to the table.

AU: Will we ever see them actually share the stage physically? What is the live performance potential for Metaspherical?

JM: At this time, we have nothing confirmed for live performances, but I am in talks with some very good people about putting together a show-case performance set with many of the musicians involved some time next year. Then from there, the plan is to put together a line-up of players to take it on tour... and this tour would have some very cool/interesting collaborations, as many of the players involved with the recordings said if I came through their city, they would come out and jam!

AU: Tell us about your partnership with Sweet Relief and what it means for the project and yourself personally.

JM: Well, first of all, for those who don't know, Sweet Relief is a charity that aids working musicians who suffer physical or mental disabilities. For me personally, it means a lot to be in a partnership with them, as I had to overcome a very severe head injury some time ago and went through seven brain surgeries. This was a very hard time in life for me as I had to re-learn many aspects of the guitar and fight for my life in many different ways both physically and mentally. So it means a lot to me on a personal level to know that all of the music that Metaspherical releases will in some way help people who have had to go through similar things. And on a bigger level (concerning the involvement of everyone else), I think it gives a real sense of meaning to the project, to bring so many awesome musicians together from different backgrounds and create an awareness of something very positive.

AU: How do you go about combining contributions from so many artists around the world? Have any particularly amazing creative moments arisen from these collaboration?

JM: Well, everybody involved recorded their parts at different studios around the world, and then they send us the recordings in large files using programs like Dropbox etc. From there, my good friend Rob Shallcross (Strapping Young Lad, Gwar, West Of Hell) works his audio magic with aligning everything and mixing. For me, some of the "amazing creative moments" have been appreciating the co-creative aspect of what's been created through making music with people I look up to, and that have influenced me. I mean that's coming from the place of, I am just a guitarist, and the real magic in the music has come about from so many great musicians collectively putting their creative views to work.

AU: What's the writing process like for Metaspherical?

JM: The way that I have worked on songs thus far is, I'll write/arrange the guitar parts using a program called GuitarPro, where you actually type the arrangements in and have it mapped out on a time grid. Whilst doing this, we will create a rough drum template, and then from there I've approached different players to add parts as they see fit. This sometimes has entailed going through multiple musicians until finding someone that works for the track on a creative level.

AU: What else should we know about the Metaspherical collective?

JM: Well, it's probably worth mentioning that Metaspherical is always looking for more killer players both known and unknown to contribute to new collaborations in the future and for touring. So, if you're reading this and are interested, by all means, find us on Facebook and send me a message! Serious inquiries only, please.

AU: Any final words for the readers of *Absolute Underground*?

JM: Well first off, I would like to thank everyone who has read this and taken an interest in what we're doing! If you like any of this, feel free to head over to Facebook and give us a like, and also check out any of these other links. Thanks again!

www.facebook.com/Metaspherical

www.metaspherical.com/

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PHOTO CREDIT: Kim Thiessen



DECEMBER EVENTS

- FRIDAY DECEMBER 4TH -

The Northwest Passage, Dagan Harding, Kris Ellestad \$10

- SATURDAY DECEMBER 5TH -

Noble Thiefs, The Mantle, Crooked Spies \$12

- FRIDAY DECEMBER 11TH -

Deluge, In Search of Sasquatch, White Chocolate Thunder, Versions \$10

- SATURDAY DECEMBER 12TH -

The Sweets, The Special Edisons, Mitch Belot \$10

- FRIDAY DECEMBER 18TH -

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- SATURDAY DECEMBER 19TH -

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Friday December 18th
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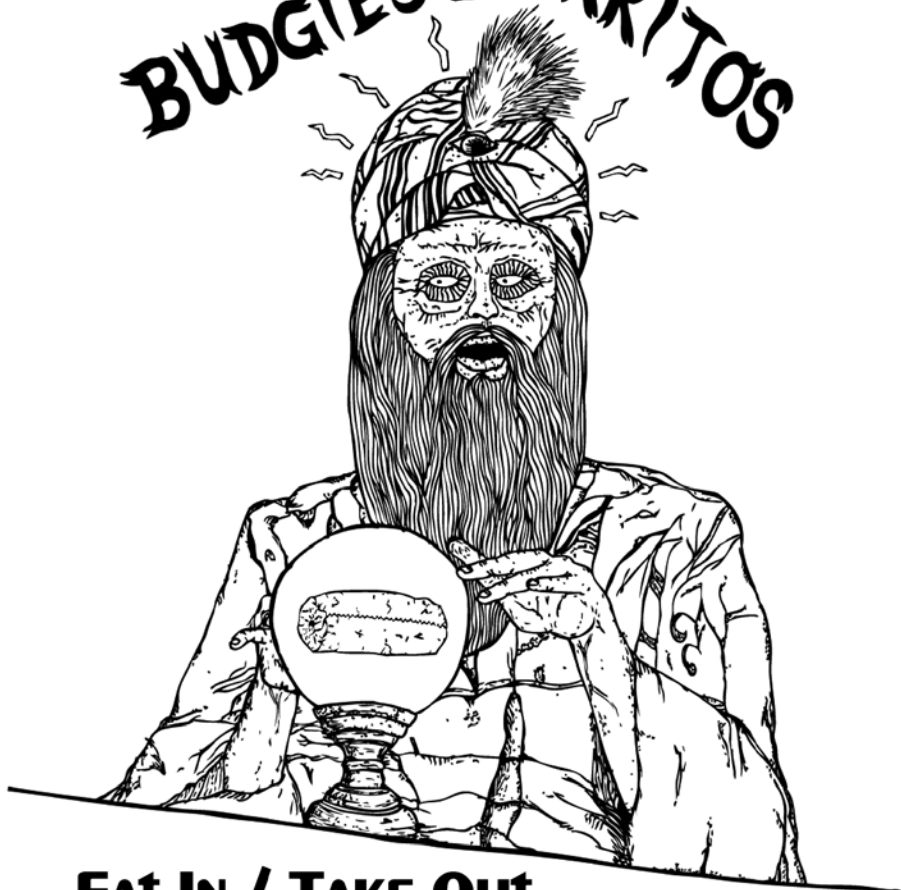
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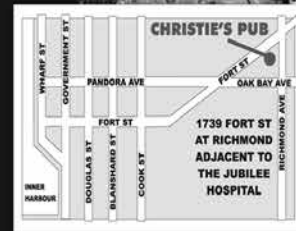
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Saturdays 5pm-6pm



L7
Interview with Donita Sparks
By Billy Hopeless

Absolute Underground: So stoked to be chatterboxing with you again, it's been a few years. Back then, it was kinda hit and miss, but from what I see on the interweb it's all good timing and you're rocking like never before! Congrats! What do you attribute this victory to, and how does it feel?

Donita Sparks: Great to see you and gum flap as well, my man... been too long. I'm not sure why we're being so well-received, but it's been a total blast. I knew that our fans were still around and that we had a bunch of younger ones due to social media, but the press has been very supportive of our return as well. I think that we are playing pretty decently and we still have a lot of energy swirling around at our shows. The crowds have been really engaged and singing along with fists in the air. A lot of dancing, a few crowd surfers, good stuff, good vibes all around. I think sometimes you have to go away to be wanted again. I know that a lot of young women feel like the nineties were sort of a golden era of female rock bands - one of grunge's greatest legacies, I think. Our drummer, Dee, is still hitting like a motherfucker too. That, I feel, is super important.

AU: You've had a couple of different bass players, and now we find Jennifer "precious" Finch is back and it's the O.G.L7, how did that shocker of a regrouping happen?

DS: Well, when the "R" word (reunion) came up from our booking agent, in my mind I thought of Jennifer right away. I was like, if we're going to do it, let's go O.G... I heard through the grapevine that she might be in if asked. When I called her on the phone for the first time in NINETEEN YEARS (she still has the same phone number that I still have permanently etched in my brain), she said yes immediately, almost like, "What the hell took you so long to ask?" She said, "This will be so fun!" and that's actually the first time that I thought that this could actually be fun. I was thinking of doing it for the fans who kept our legacy alive into the digital age, but I hadn't really thought about "fun." I mean, there were some weird feelings between all of us through the years, but it has been an absolute blast. Our L7 vernacular has survived and we are all still fluently speaking it to each other and we laugh together all the time. We wasted a lot of time by not hanging out together, but playing music and touring together is the best way to do it, for sure.

AU: I really liked the last album, *Slap Happy*, are you going to release a new L7 album, and if so, when?

DS: Thanks, I like *Slap Happy*, too. Not many people have heard it. You know just after the band broke up in 2001, the incompetent distributor for that record went belly-up. We couldn't afford to buy the remaining copies of that CD, so the fuckers put them in a landfill. It was the final humiliating blow, the sour cherry on top of the crap sundae, as it were. Painful to me on many levels, including environmentally! We have no plans to record anything new at this time. We actually have some never-released stuff that I

could revisit, it's just not at the top of my priority list at this time. Maybe down the line.

AU: I also dug the solo stuff you put out a few years back - you still doing that, or plan to in the future?

DS: I have a ton of stuff that is in various stages of completion. I will probably release it at some point. I dig it, I just have a tough time editing myself. I always get "demo-itis" as well, which is, I get attached to my first pass demo. I get fond of the flaws and fuck-ups which usually is not a good idea to release to the public. I'm not talking about a full band in a room banging out a rad, sloppy-with-spirit first take. I'm talking about me singing nonsensical words or syllables into a mic over sloppily played tracks that I've recorded myself quickly to get the idea down before it disappears. I like those recordings. To re-record them in tune, in time, etc, is where the procrastination comes in. I just want to move on to the next non-releasable idea.

AU: Tell us about the L7 documentary... the Kickstarter for it was more than successful and the trailer looks amazing. How's that going for you, and what can we expect from it?

DS: The documentary came about from me meeting the director Sarah Price (*American Movie, The Yes Men*) at a dinner party. I told her that I had been digitizing a bunch of L7 home movies, interviews, personal photos, etc. She really wanted to take a look at the home movie footage and really dug it. She asked if she could take a stab at trying to pull together a doc out of it. I was like sure, go for it. So basically we've all just done audio interviews and submitted stuff from our personal L7 collections. The producers wanted to do the Kickstarter to raise funds for Sarah, the editor, and other production and post-production costs. I had reservations at first because if it didn't do well it wouldn't look great for L7, you know? So we just decided to help out with a bunch of signed items and other cool stuff. The success of the campaign was amazing and a big relief. I believe that Sarah is shooting for a debut at South By Southwest 2016.

AU: If I recall right, years ago you did an interview with Nardwuar and mentioned the cavity checks at the Canadian border... How was it coming into Canada this time?

DS: I don't think any of us have experienced a Canadian cavity search, but gals can dream. It was very mellow this crossing, but the display of confiscated endangered species stupid animal products was super depressing. Figurines of elephant families made of fucking ivory. So sick. Our van was not searched. We used to put Bear magazines on top of our merch boxes to keep the searches to a "bear" minimum. There's nothing that will make a border cop move on faster than photos of hairy, naked men with tool belts on. *Tip for younger bands*

AU: What's the most unique or essential stuff on the L7 rider this round?

DS: Not very unique, but here goes: ice packs (there is usually some kind of injury within the band), hummus and veggie tray, Corona Light, pizza after the gig, decent quality champagne. That last one we are keeping a list of which promoters have been naughty cheapskates or nice. Our list will go to Santa Claus to determine if they get any coal in their stockings.

AU: On tour, I've always found there's one musical artist or album that you all listen to as comfort food for the ears. What's your go-to tunes this voyage?

DS: Well, I have an "L7 Club Mix" that we've been playing between bands before our set at shows. It's lively and fun with The Allah-las, The Growlers, Bleached, Elvis, James Brown, etc. It gets us pumped and jumpy before we go on. If I'm getting ready at the hotel, I like to listen to Naomi Shelton and The Gospel Queens. Her voice is amazing and the band is very classic R&B. Chillin' after the gig, I love The Wooden Ships *Back To Land* album. Total psychedelic, trance, heroin music.

AU: What's the craziest thing, person, or experience you've witnessed this round that still has you amazed and confused?

DS: Well, we have many fabulous looney tunes people hanging around before and after our shows, but we've always had that. I will say that we were all really sick with very bad colds for our first week of reunion shows in Europe. I mean, our tour manager had to carry me out of my bunk soaking wet with sweat, help me get dressed and scoot me out onto a festival stage for the first time in 15 years! We were all in bad shape and yet when we walked out on stage and that adrenaline kicked in we still rocked it. So weird how that works - the show biz ham in us kicks the cold's ass for an hour and a half, then back into our bunks. No wild stories on that one, sorry about that, Billy.

AU: As this is our Absolute X-mas issue, has L7 ever played a Christmas song? If not, what would it be called if you did? Off the top of my head, may I suggest "Noel-7"?

DS: No we have not, but we have played a rocking surf version of "Auld Lang Syne" at a New Year's Eve show decades ago. One of my pet peeves is to not hear and sing "Auld Lang Syne" on New Year's at the stroke of midnight. Is it too much to ask for, people? Get it together. Anyway, we have not ever performed a Christmas song. Little known fact about me.... I LOVE Christmas songs and know most of the lyrics to most of them. "Noel-7" is a good suggestion, but a tad bit maudlin for my taste. I always think of the Andy Williams version of "The First Noel"... get the warm bath water and

razor blades ready for a Christmas suicide attempt to that one. I think I'd go for a jaunty version of the "L-7 Days of Christmas" for our many fans with ADD. And though I hate to lose the line, "ten lords a-leaping," we would just start with, "seven swans a-swimming." Most people only know the "five golden rings." and "a partridge in a pear tree" lines, anyway.

AU: Speaking of Christmas songs, there's been many famous duets throughout the ages. What if me and you duet, what would be our cool Yule duet... Donita Sparks the Hopeless Hearth?

DS: Yes, what would be our "Jackson" of a Christmas song? "Sleigh Ride" and "Winter Wonderland" are probably my faves, but topping the rock versions by The Ronettes and Darlene Love would really be a bitch. We could throw a total curve ball by going religious with "We Three Kings," (although there would only be two of us). It's got a good melody, especially when the refrain hits with, "O Star of Wonder, Star of Light." I'm thinking we could go sea shanty, beer-drinking style with that one. Speed it up just a bit, get those steins lifted and swinging, dig? But I'm open to suggestions, of course.

AU: Once again, thank you for gifts of past present and future, and I'm glad to see you're getting the love and respect you deserve. Here's yer chance to give an X-mas greeting, or message to all our readers worldwide, including myself! So ho-ho-ho get off the throne and piss in the snow, here's all she wrote.

DS: Thanks Billy. My holiday greeting is: Happy, Happy, Joy, Joy to all, and if you're prone, (who isn't) don't be depressed. Do something nice for someone, give some time or money to charity. Oh, and don't wear platform boots on icy sidewalks. A few years ago, I fell on ice whilst sneaking a cigarette outside my mom's house on Christmas night. I literally fell on my face and ended up with a life-sized Hitler moustache of a scab above my lip. I had to wear it on a plane all the way from Chicago back to LA. Really embarrassing. Peace the heck out.

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Zimmers Hole

Interview by Reverend Death

Absolute Underground: So where have you been lurking the last 6.66 years?

Chris "The Heathen" Valagao: I was spending some time in the homeland, tending the Flat Lands of Ulence

AU: What has summoned you all to surface now?

Heathen: The Great Horn of the Mighty Tug and the pathetic state of the music industry.

AU: For those who don't know how did Zimmers Hole evolve?

Heathen: Zimmers Hole is more of a club than a band, a brotherhood. In the beginning, the Tribe of Lords would gather for amusement, crapulence and metal! On a dare, we brought Zimmers Hole to the stage, the first of many shows played with Process. The crowd response at that first show was crazy. It was clear the brotherhood had become a solid live act. At first, almost all the songs were inside jokes and satire, but in time the sound twisted into more of a mash-up tribute to true metal.

AU: Can we expect a new release any time in the near future?

Heathen: There is no shortage of material... many ideas, old and new. El Smooche has been hard at work during his extended stay on Planet Shabulous. Release... hand release?

AU: How did Zimmers Hole get the name?

Heathen: The late Dean Robert Zimmer, a.k.a. "The Chief." At the time, Dean was bass player for Process, and he offered myself and Stroud an opening slot. Dean was a bit of a legend, at house parties he would declare it, "clothing optional hour," and strip down. He had a habit of spreading his ass cheeks and running backwards into a gathering of scenesters, fucking hilarious! Well,

we named the band after his anus.

AU: What other projects are the members of ZH currently playing with?

Heathen: Dark Angel, Dethklok, Testament, Death DTA, Scar Of The Martyr, City Of Fire, West Of Hell.

AU: If you had to describe your live show, where would you start?

Heathen: I think I would put it somewhere in between Cooper and Gwar; props, fluids, catering, communion, swords, chicken, and cheese!

AU: So home base for most of the band is Vancouver, how is the scene currently?

Heathen: Vancouver has always had a strong metal scene, at times small, and without decent venues, but loyal. The scene is full of new talent and a stronghold of seasoned players.



AU: Your show is a very "crowd interactive" show... during "That's how Drunks Drink," would you recommend having two beers on hand or simply having a jug?

Heathen: Double-fister, mister! A beer in the hand is like a bird in the bush (jugs don't live long in the mosh).

AU: What are the names of your "ladies" that you share during "Fista Corpse"?

Heathen: The first is Corpsina, a.k.a. Crispy, found her in the remains of a crackhouse fire. The blonde is Mercedes; a meth accident gave her that leathery complexion.

AU: In past tours, how was it dealing with all your props when crossing customs?

Heathen: The best was in Germany, I had a big army duffle full of swords and corpses, and they didn't open it. The guy at the screening station just kept calling other customs officers over until there were like fifteen people gathered around the screen laughing, then the guy just turns to me and says to go ahead. Excellent! The usual is endless delays and silly questions.

AU: Which band member can eat the most cheeseburgers?

Heathen: El Smooche, hands down!

AU: Guilty pleasures for music right now?

Heathen: Well, I'm enjoying the latest from At The Gates, some Alestorm, listening to Gastrorrexis from Ecuador and a little Baby Metal... they amuse me.

AU: Is Jed still sporting his Dayton Boots? Any chance there will be a ZH Dayton available for merch one day?

Heathen: Jed Simon lives in his Daytons and that would be awesome balls, anything of that quality would be a pretty penny.



AU: Being fans of "shock rock," do you think the art of the live show has been forgotten by most bands?

Heathen: Putting on any sort of stage production requires a budget and a crew. Just getting out and playing shows is a challenge. The show has not been forgotten, so much as it has become unattainable.

AU: Any pre-show rituals?

Heathen: A couple cold ones, and some double-gluten crackers with bald eagle bone marrow pâté.

AU: Who inspired "Mushroom Mattress"?

Heathen: I did, of course. Pissed my bed so many times that mushrooms started to grow there.

AU: Is having a tetanus shot required for your crew?

Heathen: Hair does not grow on my steel! I think in Latin "tetanus" means ass head... What are you trying to say?

AU: Strangest ZH rider request?

Heathen: Your mom! This interview's over!

Catch Zimmers Hole live on January 22nd at The V Lounge in Victoria, and on January 23rd at the Rickshaw Theatre in Vancouver

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PHOTO CREDIT: Kevin Eisenlord



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Dayglo Abortions

Interview by André Lanier

Absolute Underground: What's coming up with the band?

MA: Murray Acton: Well, the most obvious thing is our new album. We have been impatiently waiting for it for two years now, and it will finally be out in the new year. We are very proud of it. Both the sound and the content are top-notch. I wanted the songs to be reminiscent of our first release, "Out of The Womb," in their simplicity, but at the same time keep true to the punk/metal hybrid style that the Dayglos have always played. With the aid of our producer, Rob Shallcross, Mike Jak joining in on the recording, and our drummer Blind Marc laying down one of the most aggressive drum tracks I've ever heard, I think we will raise a few eyebrows on this one.

AU: You are starting a tour, is there a theme for it?

MA: How's this for a theme: "I'm fucking starving and I need to earn some money world tour"? Naw, I'm kidding (sort of). It will be in support of the album, *The Armageddon Survival Guide*, and will probably have some kind of apocalyptic title, I guess.

AU: Do you have festivals on the tour?

MA: The tour is going to be more like a bunch

of tours. I know that our label is working to get us on multiple festivals on the European leg for sure, and these days it seems like we play at least one or two festival-like events on every trip.

AU: Do you play a different set list depending on the crowd or the venues?

MA: Once we are out supporting the new album, it is my plan to start each night by playing the new album in its entirety, then following it up with either *Feed Us A Fetus*, *Here Today Guano Tomorrow*, or *Two Dogs Fucking*. That will encompass a lot of songs that people haven't heard us play live in a while and will, I think, make for quite a show for the audience. On occasion, we end up playing a festival or the likes that is really focused on metal, and in that case we will tend to pad the set list with songs that suit the "refined tastes" of the metal crowd; but these days, for the most part, people know where we're coming from. I don't think too many people are expecting us to conform to any preconceptions an uneducated audience might have.

AU: Who are the bands that will open for you during the tour?

MA: We tend to leave that up to the local promoters. We like to see each town get local acts on the bill, because we feel that one of our missions is to encourage young bands to build their respective scene in each place we play. That's important to us of course because that means more people at the shows, but it's important to everyone because music is important, to human existence, and the world needs young people continually creating new music for more reasons than we can cover in this interview.

AU: Any town you are excited to play or visit?

MA: One of the coolest things about punk rock is its community aspect. When we go on tour, it is like we are going out on a big holiday to visit all of our friends all around the world. The Dayglos have never been snobby or elitist about what we do. We are just regular people, and as such, we have always hung out with our audience. I stand in the crowd and watch the backup bands, get my drinks from the bar, chat with people, and most importantly, make friends with people in every town we play. After being around for as long as we have it's rare for us to play a town that we have never played before. Usually, we have been there

many times and sometimes it seems like we know almost everyone at the show. There are definitely towns that have bigger shows than others, but even that isn't that important because sometimes those small, tight shows are the best of all. I go on the philosophy, "Every day is an adventure." It doesn't matter what we're faced with each night, we're gonna rock the shit out of the place.

AU: How does it feel to play in front of a crowd that was not born when you started?

MA: That is a big compliment, I think. The kids these days have plenty of choices when it comes to entertainment, so to see them coming out to our gigs makes me feel pretty good.

AU: Do you see a change in punk music and the fans since the beginning?

MA: For sure. You hear people going on about how punk is dead, etc, all the time, and in some ways it really is. It has been assimilated by the mainstream and now pop bands are cranking out something that sounds almost like punk, but isn't. They use punk songs on TV commercials to sell shit, and that's not very "punk," is it? But I'll tell you, every time I start thinking punk is dead, there will be some kids playing in the backup band that start the whole fucking revolution all over again. I think what has happened is punk has become less tied to any specific genre of music and has become more of an ideology of resistance to social stereotypes and a force that fights the authorities that would have us all conform to their perverse desires of a world where everyone goes to work for the multideath corp, pays their bills, and doesn't ever complain or aspire to any higher calling.

AU: You were opposed to Stephen Harper during the last election, how do you feel about it now?

MA: Yahoo! Stephen Harper is gone. Unfortunately, I'm not sure how much of his legacy will be undone by the Liberals. They also support globalization, believe we are being held in siege by Islamic terrorists, do not recognize that America is in many ways the biggest threat to world peace, and do not see the UN, and G20 etc. are nothing more than a political front for the world bank and multinational corporation's takeover of the world. On a lighter note though, our new leader has the kind of charm and refined wit that will undoubtedly help restore some of Canada's sadly beaten foreign image. Harper was basically an asshole, and he didn't do us much good that I can see anywhere.

AU: With the world still going crazy, do you have ideas for new songs?

MA: That's one good thing about all the chaos in the world, there is no shortage of song material. I think there is still lots of material to be exploited with the oncoming battle of the religions. It's tricky shit, though. It's easy to get labelled as a racist and then get hung out to

dry on the social media sites if you say the wrong thing. I have, thus far, made a career of saying the wrong thing. My shit always offends someone and I try not to worry about the consequences of that. Anyone who knows me will testify that I am in no way racist or a bigot of any kind, but I like getting peoples' emotions up about a subject, and taking a controversial stand on a topic is a good way to light that fire. For instance, our label, in their wisdom, has decided to cut one of the songs on the new album because they are afraid it might be misunderstood. It's a little play on racism about a KKK member who stutters and it suggests that the KKK are actually experts on discrimination and could educate our children on what it feels like to be hated because they are hated by everybody. I personally don't buy into hate and try to give everyone the chance to establish their own belief as long as their belief doesn't infringe on the right of anyone else from doing the same.

AU: Is the new album coming out soon?

MA: Well, as I have already mentioned earlier, yes, we have a new album coming out in January. We will be playing an amazing show in Vancouver in the new year with the likes of Zimmers Hole, Process, the Golars and others. I believe that we will be debuting the new album in its entirety. The show is going to be at the Rickshaw on January 23rd, 2016, and is going to be an event of a lifetime with the return of two amazing Vancouver metal bands, Zimmers Hole and Process. Don't miss it.

AU: You have been around since the 80s, what keeps you going?

MA: I'm not gonna kid you. I'm just a typical 55-year-old white single male in a sea of middle-aged white single males. I've got needs that aren't gonna get met unless I can separate myself from the herd and get noticed somehow. Basically, if it wasn't for punk rock, I wouldn't have a hope in hell of getting laid. Besides, after doing this for 30 years, it's about the only thing I'm good at anymore. At least it's fun though, and I get to travel around and visit all the friends I have made over the years. On the road... everybody loves you and the beers are free.

thedaygloabortions.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Cat Ashbee



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Season of Mist

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for a one-off performance and I got to choose three local openers. That was also the same night I announced Scrape was moving to a larger location (our current location).

AU: What are some of the major changes you've seen in the Vancouver and/or Canadian metal

of metal music and new music as a whole is if the consumer pays for what they listen to, and doesn't steal.

AU: As the owner of a very successful vinyl shop, what is so special about that particular physical form? We live in a digital world, and yet vinyl is ever on the rise. What about the medium do you think is important/appealing?

JJ: Vinyl has always been an interest to my customers and has never been a fad. I've been selling new vinyl for 18 years. The record companies pulled their heads of out their asses a few years back and realized there's a huge demand and money to be made, and [since then] more vinyl has been pressed. Therefore, the sales have grown as more titles have been made available.

I believe what is so appealing about vinyl, aside from the warm sound, is the expanded artwork. The packaging and the attention to detail that is put in, along with the small runs the labels produce, can make records quite collectable. For example, when a label releases only 500-1000 of a title on vinyl and 50 are one colour, 150 are another and so forth, half the fun is the search for these various versions. For the metal fan in particular, it's quite normal to own two to five versions of the same release. It's what we do. I'm guilty of it, myself.

AU: In your statement on the website, you say you're closing down to pursue other goals. Was this one of the hardest decisions of your career?

JJ: Definitely the hardest. I've been struggling with making this decision for years. What's made it so hard is that the store has such a loyal following and sales are still strong, it's just time for me to move on. Closing down would be an easy decision if sales were tanking and no one was coming through the doors, but that's not the case. I'd rather close or sell the store while it's still a success and leave on a high note. I want to expand my career further in the music industry.

There's much more I want to try.

AU: It's my understanding that you had a deal to sell the shop, but it didn't go through. You've since said that the shop will be closing at the end of this year regardless – is there still time for someone to buy it? What will happen if there are no takers?

JJ: I've recently posted an announcement on the Scrape Records Facebook page and at www.scraperecords.com, informing the metal community on the status of Scrape. Many are concerned and are exploring avenues to purchase Scrape Records. I want to be as accommodating as possible, providing a multitude of options for someone to purchase Scrape. If I don't see any serious action or movement made by mid-December, Scrape will close forever some time in January.

AU: Can you tell us about some of the other projects you have on the go, or are planning to undertake in the future? Will you still be working in the Vancouver metal community?

JJ: I think it's more likely than not I will still be involved in the metal community... [but] to what extent, I'm not sure, maybe not at all. I'm exploring some options and I don't want to limit myself or rule out new opportunities that might arise. First things first, I think a killer holiday is in order to help clear the cobwebs.

AU: Any final words for your loyal customers and Canadian metal brethren?

JJ: It's simple, without the Disciple, there is no Scrape. It's because of them and their loyalty that the store has flourished for 18 years, and it could very well continue to prosper for another 18 years. I salute the Disciple!

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scenes over the past 20 years? Is there hope for the future of metal?

JJ: There is definitely much more separation in the past ten years between those who buy physical product and those who go to concerts. It's two very different groups of people; those who appreciate the value in paying for and owning the physical product, and those who just like to be seen at shows. Thankfully there's still many who like to pay for both. The only hope for the future

Scrape Records

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: We're very sad to hear that Scrape is closing down – Vancouver is losing an institution, unless someone steps up to the plate! You've been running Scrape Records for 18 years – any highlights you'd care to share? What have been your favourite things about running your own place for nearly two decades?

JJ: Favourite moments include the many bands we've had in store over the years for Meet 'N Greet sessions and/or have played live in store. Some meet 'n greet highlights include Alice Cooper, Opeth, In Flames, Cradle of Filth, and Chris Jericho, plus memorable in-store performances from Apocalyptica, Firewind and, of course, Devin Townsend.

Arguably, the biggest highlight of them all was the support Live Nation showed Scrape in 2007 by putting together a 10th Anniversary show for the store. Live Nation brought in Arch Enemy

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Dena Lazarenko

Interview by Willow Gamberg

Absolute Underground: Who are we speaking to and what are you most infamous for?

Dena Lazarenko: My name is Dena Lazarenko and I guess I'm known for creepy ink work, dark, occult, ink-etching style.

AU: Where are you working out of currently?

DL: Electro-LadyLux Tattoo, Vancouver BC

AU: What makes the shop special?

DL: I think there are a few things that make the shop special; I think the fact that it has lasted so long, currently celebrating our 20th anniversary of being here, as well as (in the past) it was all-female run and owned, which is pretty cool. It's an awesome work place.

AU: How long have you been tattooing.

DL: I've been here for seven months, I've only been tattooing for three months.

AU: But you've been doing art for much longer than that, right?

DL: Yes, I've been doing commissions since 2005, I was a full-time hired artist. Technically

though, my first commission... I was walking around with a piggy bank I'd made out of a pop bottle, selling drawings of cats. I was under ten, and I would walk around selling drawings of cats. So pretty much all my life I've made an effort to sell my work.

AU: What can you tell us about your style of art?

DL: I would define my art as very traditional, in the sense that the materials I use are dip pens and traditional speedball ink. I like to keep it really simple. I draw all of my stuff freehand also, I don't use any kind of contraptions... it's just ink and paper. There's a darker feel to it... I try to take things that will generally make people feel uncomfortable and make them beautiful. Currently I'm drawing Hell... I'm drawing a whole series of Hell.

AU: How do you find tattooing compares to your previous ink-and-paper experience?

DL: It's different in that it's less forgiving than any other form of art, it's not something you can start over. If you make a mistake, you have to work with that. Also, it's not like paper because you have to work with the curvatures of the body, make it go with the muscles, etc.

AU: What inspires your art?

DL: There are a few things that inspire me. For my still-life work, my drawings... I clean skulls on the side, just for enjoyment, and a lot of times working with that, I want to draw the bones after. For the series I'm working on, I read Dante's Inferno, and very much liked it, so I'm drawing every level of Hell, based on the book. So something like that inspires me and I obsessively draw from what I've read.

AU: You mentioned during a conversation that you got

your start with ink from doing artwork for the local band Black Wizard?

DL: Yes. I didn't really have experience with ink or working with bands before, the work I did was very traditional, I drew a lot of families and their dogs... I drew a lot of portraiture and that's what I was used to. I had an appreciation for darker work but never had the opportunity to explore that because I had to do what paid the bills. But when [Black Wizard] asked me to do the art for the album *Young Wisdom*, they just requested that there would be a portrait in the back, and that it all be done in ink, and then I could do whatever I wanted on the front. From there, a lot of other bands hired me, and I got the opportunity to do posters, all based on that work.

AU: You have an amazing mentor here at LadyLux... tell us about her!

DL: First off, Teresa Johnson was my top choice in the city. I wanted to find someone whose art I appreciated as much as I respected them as a person, because I'm going to spend every day with them. I think that Teresa really fulfilled both of those things. She has the ability to work in any style, essentially... I don't as an artist, and that's a skill I could learn and need to work on. She's been tattooing for 30 years and the shop's been around for 20 years, so I could not have found a better role model. She swore off apprentices before me, but I wouldn't take no for an answer, because this was the place I really wanted to be, I just kept emailing until she'd meet up with me, and then when I got here, I finally sat down with

INK SLINGERS



her and showed her my work, and she's like, "Alright, when can you start?" And I said, "Right now."

AU: Do you have a tattoo or a kind of tattoo you really want to do on someone?

DL: I want to tattoo all of the Addams family... I have an obsession with the Addams family, I want to be Morticia. That's my boss' nickname for me. I want people to challenge me to do more realistic and darker work,

and see what I can do!

AU: Do you have any advice for other people starting out like you have?

DL: Get an apprenticeship! And if you don't get one the first time you try, keep looking. Like I said before, try to find someone you can respect both as a person and for their art, and be willing to learn and also be willing to clean toilets for six months first, because that's a part of it, too. Go into it with modesty... it's something you have to earn.

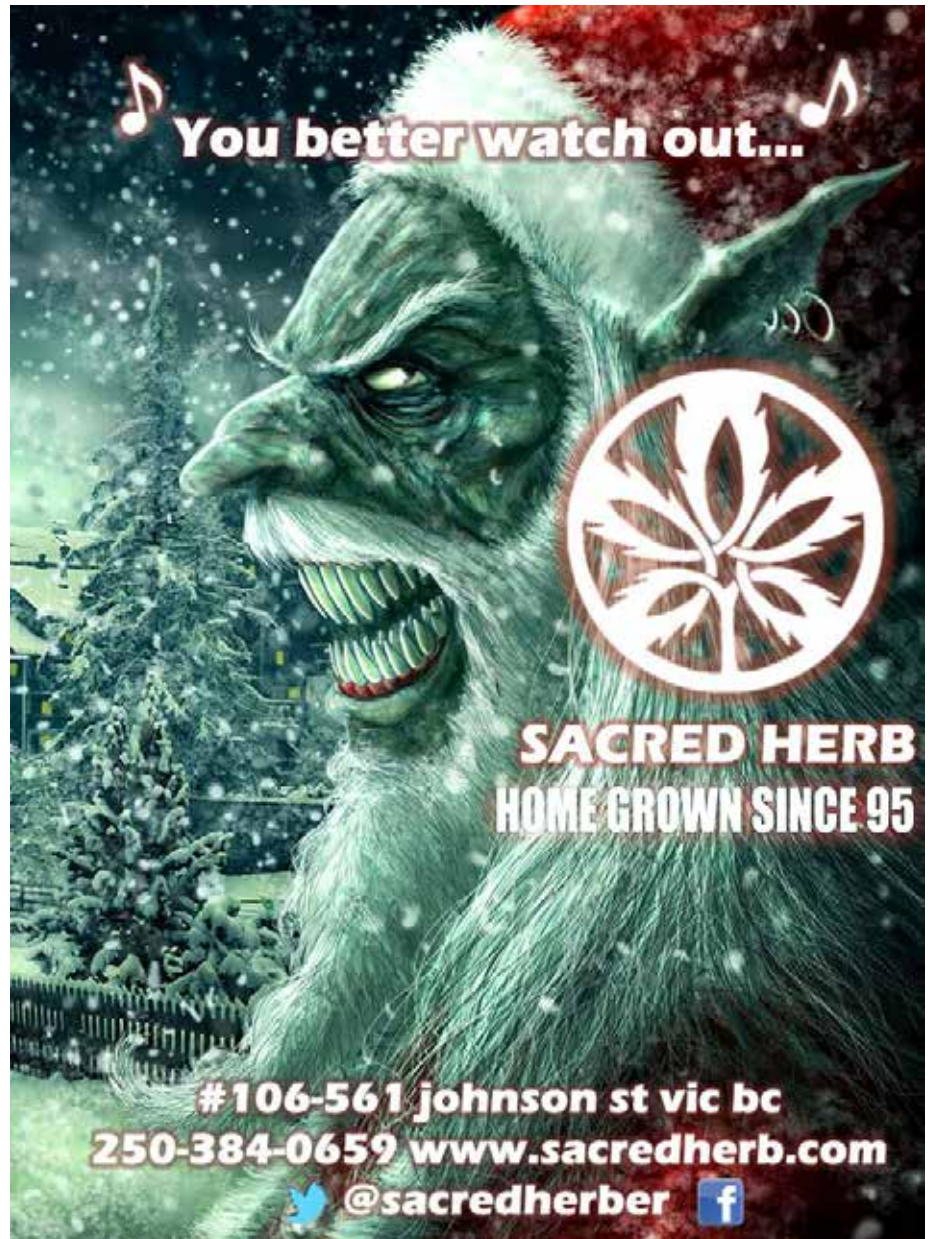
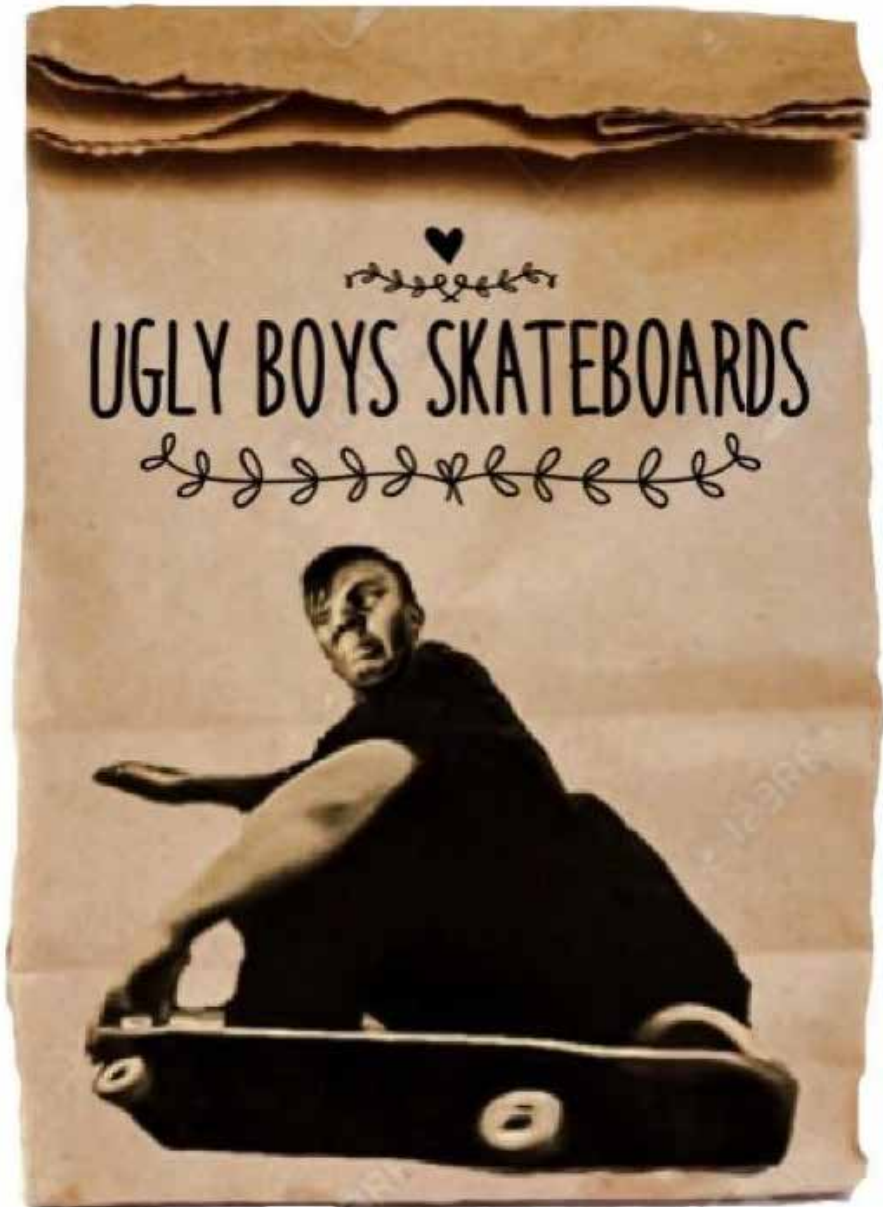
AU: Any particular music you like to listen to while you work?

DL: Depends who I'm working on and what time of day it is. Anything heavy. When I'm working on band commissions, I like to listen to the band I'm

doing the work for. Not what's playing right now... We listened to Fall Out Boy all day... can we change it?

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Absolute Live Reviews

Titus Andronicus

**Spider Bags
Baked**

The Biltmore Cabaret

Vancouver, BC

October 2nd, 2015

My introduction to Titus Andronicus is likely shared by many: their video for "A More Perfect Union."

A group of American Flag-toting New Jersey-ites play blistering guitar rock in a snow-covered forest. The band of peacoat-bundled misfits is fronted by a whiskered miscreant screaming into a tape-recorder. The raucous song has bits of The Pogues, Neutral Milk Hotel, The Replacements and Tom Petty spilling out of every guitar lick, drum fill, and "woah-oh chant." It's fucking perfect.

Fast-forward to a chilly fall night at Vancouver's Biltmore Cabaret. After two forgettable openers, the same lanky bearded man from the video, who I now know as Patrick Stickles, skips onto the stage in a pastel-pink, sleeveless "TA" shirt. The wardrobe choice showcases his sinewy arms, his right shoulder inked with a Crass tattoo. He starts with a low-key solo take on "Upon Viewing Breugel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus." It's the sole mellow moment of a set that sees stage-divers and swirling mosh pits (all to the vocal displeasure of Stickles) as early as song number two.

While Titus Andronicus is known for eclectic marathon set-lists, the evening's set was cut short due to stingy border security and the Biltmore's dance-club night starting at 11:00. While the die-hard fans would've enjoyed two hours of Titus, the abbreviated offering saw the group lean towards the rowdier side

of their catalogue to pack the time slot efficiently.

Highlights included "No Future Pt. IV" and "Dimed Out," two of the more blistering cuts off their newest album, *The Most Lamentable Tragedy*, and other barnburners like the band's two best pessimistic scream-alongs, "Titus Andronicus (Your life is over!)" and "No Future Part III (You will always be a loser!)." After two Neil Young covers and the Springsteen-ian rock-out "Fatal Flaw," the show was over and the punks spilled back onto the street.

It was a charming, blood-and-guts performance by one of the most vital punk bands of our generation.

-Michael Luis

**Deafheaven
Tribulation**

Rickshaw Theatre

Vancouver BC

October 20th, 2015

Blah, blah, blah, the most divisive band in modern metal, blah, blah, black-metal elitists, blah, blah, hipsters. We all know the narrative by now: despite containing ripping blast beats, tremolo guitars and throat-shredding vocals, Deafheaven have managed to garner both fan and critic appreciation outside of not only black metal, but the metal community at large. It's quite the feat, but one that makes sense when one examines their music and live performance.

The duty of opening the show was granted to Sweden's Tribulation. While their tour-mates in Deafheaven eschew the traditional appearance of the extreme metal scene, Tribulation embraces it: the

quartet looked androgynous in smoky makeup, plunging necklines and genital-crushing leather pants. With animal bones and foggy incense adorning the stage, the spooky Swedes set the night off strong with a blend of The Cure-esque post-punk and rollicking death n' roll.

After a brief intermission, Deafheaven took the stage. Frontman George Clarke was electric before the first song even began, conducting and instigating the audience with waving hands and an intense glare. The opener "Brought to the Water" featured buzz-saw thrash guitars and machine-gun drumming before leading into a soaring guitar lead. Track three, "Baby Blue," started with a mathematical atmospheric jam akin to Russian Circles, and non-album track, "From the Kettle Onto the Coil," perhaps the heaviest song in Deafheaven's catalogue, bludgeoned relentlessly. The set concluded with *Bermuda*-closer "Gifts for the Earth," which featured pretty guitars and acoustic strumming that took the group the closest they've ever been to, gasp, indie rock.

The band left the stage without playing anything off *Sunbather*, their 2013 breakthrough. In comparison to *Bermuda*'s ugly chugging, *Sunbather* is decidedly pretty, but fuck, does it shred live. Deafheaven closed with an encore of the record's two best songs, including the titular track and the transcendent "Dream House."

That night, the denim-vest longhairs and the skinny-jean short-hairs

moshed together and screeched aloud every word, and for one moment, all was well in the world.

- Michael Luis

**Archspire
Scimitar**

Atrous Leviathan

Distrikt Nightclub

Victoria, BC

Nov 22, 2015

I got to Distrikt about an hour early expecting to see a ghost town, so it was a pleasant surprise to see metal fans streaming in to the venue on a Sunday night. The show pretty much started on time, and the crowd was loud and visibly excited.

Atrous Leviathan were up first with their unique death-ish sound. They didn't really sound right for the first few songs - it could be that they were just a bit off this night, but I'm thinking it was more just miscommunication with the sound guy. However, as the hungry openers, they just kept powering through

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and showed pretty good energy. By the last song they seemed to pull it together, and played a long one with a sort of shoe-gaze feel to it, and I mean that in the best way. Hopefully they make better friends with the sound guy before the next show.

A local band, Scimtar, was up next. I can't understand why they aren't bigger. I've seen them a whole bunch of times and I'm never disappointed. They play tight and technical, and everyone always seems to be into it. Tonight was no exception as they started off with their loud swaggering metal; they crushed about five songs playing like they owned the place, and then unleashed a new song they've been working on. As usual, everyone was into it.

Finally, Archspire blasts out of the gate in all their tech-death fury and the crowd is getting what they came for. If you like tech, you'll really love Archspire. Spencer Prewett plays machine-gun drums as well as anybody these days. If you don't believe

me, check him out on YouTube. Even though they were short a member tonight, they didn't miss a beat, just a little bit of bottom-end sound. We all have a friend named Pilly who's going through some rough shit right now, and the second-last song, "Rapid Elemental Dissolve" was dedicated to him... they really turned it up a notch for that one. They rounded out the night with "Lucid Collective Somnambulation," which is their most recognizable song.

For a Sunday night, or any other night, this was a pretty solid show, and at a venue where I never thought I would see this much metal. I know I'll be seeing Archspire the next time they're in town.

- Michael F. Carnage



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Dieandfindout

Interview by David Goertzen

HARDCORE ALLEY

Absolute Underground: Why Dieandfindout? What's the meaning behind it and what are you guys all about?

Dan Gibbons: Yo, my dude! Dieandfindout is four friends creating a feeling, an idea, a thought that resonates within us. It represents the acceptance of the inevitable and overcoming the fear of the unknown.

AU: Any plans for 2016?

DG: The future is not always what it seems, but we're gonna try and play as many shows as we can. We just put out a two-track promo tape. We'll

DIEANDFINDOUT

crewneck sported a Get The Most patch crudely sewn on the left breast, and that immediately sparked an interesting conversation. We talked common interests: mainly hardcore. At the end of our exchange, he handed me an orange

maybe do a 7", maybe go on tour. Who knows?

AU: What do you love about hardcore?

DG: We're all about a 'to each their own' philosophy. You don't have to put on a front to stand out, you can stand out by being yourself.



jewelcase with a burnt disc containing the first Dieandfindout demo tracks on it. The quality of the five-song was rough, but hell, there were chains and a skeleton holding a sledgehammer on the cover, so that was pretty sick. I didn't get the chance to see them live until recently at Vic 42, a small studio space located at 660 Discovery Street. They were fast, groovy, pissed off and relentless. I left the venue wanting more, so I immediately got in my car and listened to their second release of 2015, on their Bandcamp page. The two songs come in just under four minutes, and start off with a very fitting quote from Bruce Lee, the master of embracing death itself. Sometimes short and sweet is just what you need while you are waiting for cheap burgers at 11:30 on a Sunday night. I recently asked Dan a few questions about Dieandfindout and their goals looking into the future.

That's one of the many things we love about hardcore.

AU: Favourite spot to play locally?

DG: Any joint without a stage.

AU: Favourite show you have played so far?

DG: I don't think any of us slept for a couple nights after the first show, but they've all been fun.

AU: Favourite record to spin on a rainy day?

DG: Ancient Heads - *It Can't Rain Forever*.

AU: Last words before you die?

DG: Free At Last.

dieandfindout.bandcamp.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Kay Gallivan

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Absolute Album Reviews

Adrenechrome - Tales From Adrenechrome Independent

A huge bombastic NOFX-goes-to-prog-summer-camp intro full of Mastodon-like stoned out harmonies that work to propel you deeper into the subconscious is a great way to start off an album. Once you're coaxed near slumber, the bottomless neo-thrash aesthetic kicks in to snap your neck back with the track "Lockstep" that comes complete with a Soundgarden-ish riff with steamy Pantera-isms bubbling underneath the surface.

This song shows off these guys' gift for the almighty riff! There's probably a whole album's worth of guitar notes in it, and the bluesy, country-esque progressions add a pleasing backdrop for some seriously warped trips. A lot of the songs on this seven-track release are like the album art: little vignettes of comic strips. It's like they've chosen to make music by taking the most badass comic storylines and stringing them together to create a super-badass storyline.

These are true tales from surreal mutant riff masters of, I'm guessing, planet Riffatron. There is everything a little metal freak could want, from banjo breakdowns to early C.O.C brutality. The characters from horror comics really come alive under the spell of the expert musicianship, and are set forth on a mission to destroy the fortress of bad music.

- Dan Potter

Silent Line - Shattered Shores Independent

Sonically, this is a very uniform grouping of songs, as each track almost serves as one larger, album-wide composition. As it turns out, it's meant to be heard as a cohesive

assembly because it's a concept album. I really get that, as throughout the album, several thematic riffs and lyrics reappear like some kind of headbangers' déjà vu.

The concept depicts a crumbling island stuck in time, being slowly worn away by an endless ocean. The folk metal refrains and exotic orchestral elements work to create a sense of dissonance that helps this seemingly hopeless condition come across as quite dire. A heavy feeling of loneliness grips you in between the lead hammer-driven, palm-muted death metal riffing. Again, a sense of disunion is present as the impressive and intricate classical-based instrumentation is paired with the monster that is death metal, creating, at times, a truly sublime listening experience.

These themes of cold and ice and of endless winters, coupled with the machine precision of the musicianship, really do bring to mind images of slabs of ice shattering into thousands of smaller pieces at the bequest of the relentless soundtrack. There are a variety of influences on this album to keep things interesting for you genre eccentrics out there, but take it from me, if you put it on make sure you're dressed for some sub-zero pummeling of the heaviest and most inescapable kind.

- Dan Potter

Leftover Crack - Vol III: Constructs Of The State Fat Wreck Chords

After eleven years, the good, the bad and the Leftover Crack are back! *Constructs of the State* is the first full-length studio album from LOC since 2004's *Fuck World Trade*. The last time we heard any new music from the band was back in 2007, on

the *Deadline* split with Citizen Fish. Being a die-hard LOC fan, I've been patiently waiting for this record to drop, and I was not disappointed. This album has everything that the fans have been asking for, and more. From the token ska punk tunes to the metal-infused, fast-paced punk ballads, this album has it all. The guest list on the new record is quite impressive; it features backing vocals from Days N Daze, Crass, Zack Religious and Bouncing Souls, to name a few. On the politically-influenced ska track "System Fucked," lead vocalist Scott (Stza) Sturgeon duels with Jesse Michaels of Op Ivy, while on tracks like "Last Legs" and "The War At Home," bands like Blackbird Raum and Intro5pect help with the writing. This is also the first record without guitar/vocals by Ezra Kire (Morning Glory). LOC recently welcomed new members Donny Morris (drums) and Chris Mann (guitar) - both great additions to the already-stunning lineup of talented musicians on this album. Brad Logan (F Minus) helped pen "Slave to the Throne," and "Amanecer De Los Muertos" features an intro with Dead Milkmen guitarist Joe Jack Talcum. The newly written songs by LOC are very catchy and feel like no time has passed between the last album! There are two songs that really stick out for a long-time fan like myself: "Poliamor Fiesta Crack!" and "Corrupt Vision." These songs are reworkings of

older tracks written by Sturgeon and bassist Alec Baillie's old band, No Commercial Value. These are easily the most danceable tunes on the record and definitely showcase the Crack rocksteady beat! The squatter punks from NYC haven't held back, and after such a long time away have shown us that they still have what it takes to write an outstanding album. I will be listening to this record for many years to come and I can't wait for whatever else LOC has in store.

- Cody No Teeth

Traitorr - Globomination Metal Bunker Media

Traitorr is a band that's been forming and playing in Victoria for a lot of years. They started from one member of Archon Legion and two from Horde of Anachron, adding one more member later. They released four songs and played some shows in 2011, but many fans were waiting for more. There was a long hiatus while the band got shit together, or wrote a lot of songs or something. They gave a few updates and teasers, but not much. Now,

a long-awaited album has finally been released - the seven-song *Globomination*.

The band must have spent a lot of that time off practising, because the album starts off sounding tight and cohesive. There is a total old-school black-and-thrash going on with the first two offerings. The vocals are noticeably different; they have a black-and-thrash feel, off-and-on, very progressive. The high clean notes get mildly comical at times, but those times are rare. The third song, "Crystal Myth," was on their last EP, I believe, but it is a welcome addition in the middle of this one. By track four, "Sacrificial Massacre," I noticed just how well the band flows together musically; not just the drums and bass, but all three of them play together seamlessly. As the album moves on, they mix in a lot more clean vocals. With a lot of the more extreme metal that doesn't always work, but here, it fits and is not over-used. As with the folksy chanting on "Order unto Chaos," the clean vocals on "Transmogrify" just totally work. And speaking of track five, it features my favourite guitar riff on the whole album.

For an album that you think will only be old-school black metal, *Globomination* has got a lot of surprises. The music ranges from sounding like old Bathory to Sepultura circa 1990, for a minute or two. The guitar and drums are great on every song - solid and seamless. Nick on drums sounds like a machine in all the best ways, with perfect timing and transitions with tempo. Every song has a few guitar parts that make your head move and there're some great riffs. The vocals are a little more all over the place: there's some shrieking, growling, chanting and clean singing. Some of it sounded a little odd to me, but for the most part it totally worked out. The best part is that it's seven fucking dollars on Bandcamp... a lot of cheap beer costs more than that.

- Michael F. Carnage



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Murray Acton Presents:

Ask The Cretin

Brad F'n Call asked: Cretin, ya dirty ol' bastard. Give us your five best survival tips for making it through a weekend of Punkfest at Spiderland Acres.

Well Brad, that's a very good question, and one that I am fully qualified to answer, as well. Not that I really care if I'm qualified, but it instills a sense of confidence in our readers.

1. Is Punkfest right for you? Or, are you right for Punkfest?

Punkfest, in case you don't know (if you don't, it's probably not for you) was started by this outrageously eccentric and bizarre dude with rainbow hair and a love for young people and everything punk (especially the UK SUBS) who dedicated his worldly assets to give disenfranchised youth a place to practice anarchistic behaviour and explore all those things that society frowns upon. He went by the name of Spider. If you can imagine Peter Pan as a 60-year-old gay street punk, that was Spider. (Not gay as in happy, more like queer as in fuck you, pig!) Punkfest started on his property in Mirimar (sic) Ontario, but was chased around by the law (as you might easily imagine), and after a while, it became almost nomadic. I played there myself at least three times, maybe four, maybe more. Hard to say. When Spider passed away, Punkfest became a celebration of his life, organized each year by some of his friends, people whose lives have been touched by a strange and wonderful person, who set a shining example of how the huge extended family of punks could be, or at least his version of it.

That said, Punkfest is not for everyone. It is musically about as extreme and truly underground as you will find anywhere, and your average listener may have difficulty fully appreciating its subtle nuances. To confuse the issue with the use of metaphors... there are dog people, and there are cat people. If you're a cat person, Punkfest is probably not for you. If you're a dog person, as in you live (or at least are capable of living) like a dog, well let's go, boy, like it says on the bottle of Bounty, ride the wave of adventure.

2. In order to survive Punkfest, you're gonna have to find Punkfest.

The depth that you have managed to dive/crawl/dig into the Canadian streetpunk scene will be the gauge of how difficult this task will be. You will probably find that it is rumoured to be held at multiple places, all of them in very rural Ontario, none of the towns' names will be familiar to you, and at least half of them don't even exist. But there will be maps, lots of them, leading all over the place. Don't follow them. None of them are leading to Punkfest. There are two winning strategies that might get you there at least 50 percent of the time (if you're lucky). It depends whether or not you are driving or going first class - hoppin' a train then hitchhiking when the tracks run out. Now, driving is great if you have a vehicle that you can abandon at any time, that will hold 10 or 15 people and their dogs, and can survive the close scrutiny of one guy that's really looking out for you... Mr. Johnny Law. The closer you get, the more he will be looking out for you. At this point I would like to make a personal comment: if the fucking pigs were really looking out for you, you should just be able to go and ask one where the fuck Punkfest is because they always seem to fucking know where it is. Oink!

So you got your vehicle and you're driving. All you have to do is head out into rural Ontario (direction doesn't matter) and start looking for hitchhikers. You want the ones that are really wasted. They will probably not act like hitchhikers because they are so wasted. Them and their dogs, they might be fucking on the side of the road (not the dogs stupid, each other), throwing shit at cars. Things like that. They are the ones you want. Pick up as many of them as you can. The more of them you have, the better the chance that one of them will know where to go. I recommend starting a few days early. The train-hopping method is way better. Pretty well any eastbound train after the prairies, or westbound after the Maritimes, that you can chase down and jump aboard will have the people that you are hoping to be partying with all weekend already aboard. All you have to do is mingle. Fit in. Make friends, and you can party all the way there with them. I'll warn you though, train-hopping is no joke, and the people that do it are hard as fuck; they don't tend to fit in, mingle, or make friends. I recommend bringing lots of drugs, all different kinds, and maybe a reliable concealed weapon of some kind, and a motherfucking loyal and vicious dog.

3. Let's assume that you have found Punkfest.

If you drove a vehicle, forget about it. Just let it go. If at the end of the weekend you miraculously find it, great, but you probably won't. Your next challenge is going to be an ordeal: you need to know a bit about yourself, here. How much booze do you drink each day? Six beers and a mickey? That's not much. You're going to have to do some training to prepare yourself for what lies ahead. I'd say you should be comfortable with being able to drink a dozen beers and a 26-er every day for a week, then on day eight, chug a couple of bottles of purple Listerine (it's ok to share that with some

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friends, but no fighting). If you get up on day nine and feel an overwhelming urge to do it all again, you should be ok for the booze. It's important to keep it going hard right up until you arrive at Punkfest, though. Then you'll be in prime shape to really get down to some drinkin'.

4. Now we're getting somewhere. OK, you have to keep it solidly in your mind, you are a finely-tuned machine at the peak of your abilities. You are representing nothing but your lost youth, and this is the para-psycho-anarchist-Olympics. It's your chance to make a lasting impression, or possibly an indentation in that secret underground subculture society that the mundanes only get glimpses of as they squint at their televisions simultaneously yearning for, and cowering in fear of everything it creates. You better have been doing lots of drugs, not just for the last week. For years. So many drugs that stoned has become straight and vice-versa. I don't mean smoking pot, that's for hippies. Everyone at Punkfest may look and smell quite a lot like hippies but they're not, or at least they like to think that they're not. You want to have developed a big time tolerance to getting stoned on pretty well anything. It's also a good idea to keep a big bag of speed on you at all times. (Not that East Coast biker crap, the real shit. Crystal, meth, ice, side. The stuff that will give you the ability to push a car over the Rockies.) Think of it as a first aid kit on steroids. If you don't love losing total control of yourself and coming to all banged up, naked, covered in mud and blood, in

the company of strangers, you should stay safe at home, waiting for your Mom to bring you some tepid milk.

5. And this brings us to the last tip I have for you. There are a lot of different kinds of punk. Flavours, you might say. Don't let this mess with your head too much, but contrary to popular belief, PUNK ROCK IS A FASHION SHOW! Never forget it. Politics, shmopolitics. Everyone's gonna be so wasted they won't be able to figure out how to not vote. Who you party with and who you get to have sex with will be decided by your "outfit," so choose carefully. Do you wanna roll with the crusties, or are you hard enough to hang with the old-schoolers? It's your choice, but if there is one single piece of actual factual information in all of these words, I have laid out here, it is this: If you show up at Punkfest with a shaved head, sporting white suspenders, and white shoelaces on your shiny jak boots, you will not be surviving the weekend that is known as Punkfest, the celebration of Spider's life.

There you have it. Dress for success, drink till you stink, enjoy the bands, but do not look like, act like, or think like a white power skinhead, and you will have a weekend of true quality time. Pure, shared with god-knows-who because you can't remember. You killed every brain cell involved in the experience as you experienced it. Doesn't get any better. Cheers Spider, and thank you for your gift.

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Absolute Film Reviews

Be My Cat: A Film For Anne
Writer/Director: Adrian Tofei

Cast: Adrian Tofei, Sonia Teodorriu, Florentina Hariton and Alexandra Stroe

Be My Cat: A Film For Anne is Romania's first found footage horror film, and the first feature from director Adrian Tofei, also the film's writer, producer and star. This disturbing portrayal of an obsessed fan making a film about an obsessed fan begs questions about reality, art, film and the industry itself, and does so with incredible guts and originality. The chilling realism is sure to make viewers squirm as if they were watching a snuff film but, thankfully, the authenticity comes from strong performances by an excellent cast. Though crawling with creep appeal, this film won't just satisfy horror fans, it should intrigue film nerds and aspiring filmmakers alike as it relentlessly pushes boundaries, making for a totally unique cinematic experience.

Adrian is a loner who lives at home with his mother. He loves girls and cats. He is also obsessed with Hollywood actress, Anne Hathaway, and is especially fond of her performance as Catwoman in *The Dark Knight Rises*. Adrian aspires to make a film with Anne, and plans on showing off his talents by recording his aspirations as a love letter of sorts, to get her attention. His film is meant to be viewed only by Anne so, as the audience, you are Anne and he refers to you as such. At first, Adrian seems weird but harmless; his quirkiness is endearing and sweet. But we

soon learn that his quirks are merely symptomatic of something much bigger—something unsettling that lurks beneath the surface.

In creating this film for Anne, Adrain tricks three lovely actresses into, essentially, becoming his props. While they believe they've signed up for an acting gig in a horror feature, they don't realize that this director's obsession with realistic perfection knows no boundaries. Adrian's pushy directing style borders on abusive as he strives to acquire a "real" actress—someone prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for art's sake. Throughout the course of the film, we see him become more and more like the character he's created in the film for Anne: "I'm not sure if I'm me, or if I'm playing the character." It's an eerie facet to the story that blurs the lines of fact and fiction.

The film's concept is simple yet incredibly effective. Following suit with other found footage films like *The Blair Witch Project*, *Be My Cat* relies on a minimalistic approach. Shot with an old school hand-held camera, the film has no special effects or camera tricks—no filler. At times, you hardly feel like you're watching a movie. Another tactic (also employed in *Blair Witch*) is using the actors' real names. It's only a movie... right?

The setting in *Be My Cat* is interesting as it's not all that scary, yet Tofei and his team manage to create a frightening atmosphere. Most of the scenes take place on the streets of a Romanian town (unbeknownst to

passersby) and in a fairly average-looking basement. Masterfully, this film turns every ordinary place into something worthy of nightmares. While credit is partly due to the found footage style which, if done well, allows the viewer to feel more like a witness than a moviegoer, the cast also deserves praise for delivering exceptionally strong performances. Sonia Teodorriu, Florentina Hariton, Alexandra Stroe and Adrian Tofei are so convincing that, at times, it's uncomfortable to watch.

Terrifying elements aside, the film has some rather compelling thematic content, particularly in relation to art and the business of movie-making. In a sense, it truly is a critique of the industry itself. Much like Tofei, the character, Adrian, wants to do something different—he wants to change the world—he is an artist. He claims that he cannot make his film in Hollywood, that it must be done in his Romanian home town. This is partly due to the character's anxiety, but it also says a lot about where great films are being made. They aren't being made in Hollywood.

More commentary on the industry appears in the depiction of the way that women are treated in film; they are expected to look a certain way, are not shown respect, and are often victimized within the business. Throughout the film, Adrian reminds the actresses to speak in English. Although this is partially so Anne Hathaway can understand what is being said, it can also be taken as a critique of the way foreign filmmakers and actors are treated in the business among the mainstream masses; in order to be accepted, one must conform.

The self-reflexive nature of *Be My Cat: A Film For Anne* is riveting. This film-within-a-film technique works incredibly well. It's extremely refreshing to see an intelligent film, not overshadowed by shock value. In fact, there isn't much gore to speak of. In that sense, the movie poster is fairly misleading. The lack of brutal carnage may prove a let down for those who find the blood and guts, but this viewer felt satisfied by the end product—a successful found footage film that cleverly blurs the lines of what's real while questioning what constitutes real art.

While the character Adrian creates his film as a love letter to Anne Hathaway, Adrian the filmmaker creates a love letter to aspiring filmmakers and artists, making a case for integrity and originality. These two ingredients tend to be left off the plate when it comes to big budget Hollywood productions. This is why foreign films appeal to this viewer. *Be My Cat: A Film For Anne* isn't a film for everyone; some moviegoers crave explosions and carnage, and aren't interested in artsy originality. For those wanting a more thought-provoking unique experience, you should definitely take a look, particularly if you're into found footage films. This is one of the best.

—Kenna Rae



Tremors 5: Bloodlines

Universal 1440 Entertainment

More than ten years after the last *Tremors* film, *Tremors 4: The Legend Begins*, (which is actually a prequel) the flesh-hungry graboids are back for more blood! It's too that bad nobody cares. This fifth film in the series is a sequel to *Tremors 3: Back to Perfection*. Even with the return of franchise star Michael Gross (*Family Ties*) as Burt Gummer, and the addition of another horror franchise star, Jamie Kennedy, (*Scream* series) almost nothing is salvageable from the wreckage of this unnecessary fifth installment. Admittedly, this viewer has not seen any of the *Tremors* sequels, but thoroughly enjoyed the 1990 original, so was hoping for at least some cheesy B-movie-type entertainment. Unfortunately, entertainment was not high on the agenda of these filmmakers.

This film takes us from the Nevada desert to South Africa, more specifically, to the World Heritage Site of the Cradle of Humankind. Crawling with limestone caves, this location would seem suitable for the graboids to inhabit, but this viewer believes that the location was selected due to a big budget from Universal Pictures, allowing the team to incorporate African wildlife and a cool backdrop into an otherwise uninteresting story. Though picturesque, the location does not serve the story well. In fact, it seems that beautiful South Africa acts as a distraction from the tale. Given how terrible the story is, this may have been intentional.

Due to his legendary monster-slaying prowess, Burt Gummer has been chosen to take on the graboid beasts yet again, this time traveling to another continent. While *Tremors* fans will be pumped to see Michael Gross resume his role as the crazed hunter/survivalist, they will be let down by the fact that his acting skills are overshadowed by the film's lack of craftsmanship and overdone effects. Jamie Kennedy is an interesting choice for Gummer's sidekick, Travis Welker. While Kennedy and Gross have decent chemistry, regrettably, the cheesy dialogue between the two seems forced, and too many other characters crowd the performances, making it near impossible to form any connections. In fact, other than Burt Gummer, there really isn't a character to root for, except for maybe the graboids.

Speaking of graboids, as expected, these monsters look pretty badass, but their presence is not nearly as prominent as it should be. The infamous "ass blasters" also reappear in this sequel but, again, without much

of an impact. The kills in this film are actually quite artsy—a silhouette and some blood splatters often take the place of a visible attack. Though the artsy effects are impressive, a monster movie deserves some straight-up chomping and devouring. The monsters in this film seem to serve the purpose of having wicked special effects for a ridiculously big budget film, but at what cost? Special effects are certainly imperative within the genre, and vary depending on the look the filmmakers are going for, but how far can they carry a film? Where 2002's *Eight Legged Freaks* did an excellent job of blending characters, story, plot and effects, *Tremors 5* pours everything into esthetics which actually makes it annoying to watch.

While fans of the franchise may be intrigued enough to see *Tremors 5*, saying they won't like it would be a staggering understatement. The plot is weak, along with the majority of the characters, and yet again we have a horror film plugging money into the wrong departments. Although awesome effects are great, the film is lacking on so many other levels, namely storytelling. The writers work hard at squeezing in tributes to cult films like *Die Hard*, *Jurassic Park* and, quite obviously, *Hellraiser: Bloodline*, but these extras only emphasize how terrible and unoriginal the script is. Try writing your own stuff.

There comes a time in a series when you have to stop. You want to leave when the party's getting going, so fans will remember you fondly. Unfortunately, *Tremors* stayed far too long at the party. In fact, this film made the series into that guest that not only won't leave, but won't shut the hell up! Go away, *Tremors*, and please don't come back, unless you manage to get Kevin Bacon on board.

—Kenna Rae

Silent Night, Deadly Night

Anchor Bay

On Christmas Eve, 1974, Billy and his family are on their way to visit Grandpa at the old folks' home. When they arrive, Grandpa tells Billy that Santa will punish all naughty children and that he should be wary of the old, fat man. After leaving, the family stops to help a man dressed as St. Nick stranded on the side of the highway. Santa ends up being a robber and guns down Billy's parents right in front of him and his younger brother. The two children escape the ordeal and we flash forward a few years to Billy and his brother living in the care of nuns at an orphanage. Billy is still having a hard time adjusting to the fact that

Santa Claus murdered his parents, and the nuns are slowly trying to get Billy back to the way he was. Close to Christmas, Billy stumbles onto two teens having sex and gets caught by the head nun. She then beats and scolds Billy, telling him that these types of things will get naughty children punished. Again, we flash forward to Billy, now 18, being let out of the orphanage and offered a job as a stock boy at a department store for the holidays. The guy who's supposed to play Santa at the store on Christmas Eve doesn't show up for his shift, and Billy must don the suit of the man he hates more than anyone on the planet. This, along with some bratty kids, makes Billy flip out and he ends up going on a kill-crazy rampage. He murders everyone in the store and then sets his sights on the town and anyone who he feels should be punished. *Silent Night, Deadly Night* has some decent gore effects and some unique kills (the girl hung up on the deer head comes to mind), and the story works for a Christmas holiday horror flick. It's also an interesting take on the slasher genre, because we know who the killer is from the very beginning of the film. We follow Billy as he hacks and slashes his way through his victims, until he makes his way back to the orphanage to get revenge on the evil nuns of his youth. I enjoyed the camp factor and the fact that the film embraces its own silliness. The filmmakers realized that they would be ostracized for making a film about a killer Santa, but they went ahead and made it anyway. This makes *Silent Night*, in my opinion, one of the better "holiday" slasher films out there. Plus, Linnea Quigley gets naked, and who in their right minds wouldn't want to see that?! The Anchor Bay Blu-ray release has an audio commentary and an interview with director Charles E. Sellier Jr. It also contains all the cut gore and violence scenes that aren't included in the feature film. The quality of the cut scenes aren't up to the same HD as the rest of the film, but it's still nice to see the complete movie with everything intact. I highly recommend this film to anyone out there wanting a nice change from all the regular holiday crap that is usually floating around this time of year. *Silent Night, Deadly Night* is a fun flick that should be a staple for most peoples' holiday viewing.

—Cody No Teeth



Absolute Horror

Absolute Horror

By Vince D'Amato

I can't believe December is upon us already, and the decade of the 2010s is half over! Looking back over 2015 regarding horror cinema (mostly, in my case, still of the direct-to-video format – I'm an avid Blu-ray and DVD consumer), probably the most valuable thing I'll take away from this year is a fully readjusted and reinvigorated passion for indie films in the horror genre.

Decades gone are the platinum years of Hollywood horror cinema and those mavericks who helped usher it in – Sam Raimi, Sean Cunningham, Wes Craven, George Romero, Roger Corman, Dan O'Bannon, Stuart Gordon, John Carpenter – they have gone on to other things, including semi-retirement, or in the worst cases, have passed away and left us in a world without them. For a while, as horror cinema crept past the dateline of the new millennium, I had high hopes for a new wave of horror and those splatter filmmakers that appeared to be making a splash in Hollywood – Rob Zombie, Neal Marshall, Darren Lynn Bousman, James Wan, and Leigh Wannell. Sadly, after they gave us a promising start, I was soon disappointed to find no real new horror movement happening in Hollywood. The only significant movement going on was the frenetic overdose of inexplicable found-footage fright flicks. Well, inexplicable is not exactly the right word, it is easy to see what happened – the rabid rash of found footage films popping up in cinemas were cheap to make, easy to market, and they made a shitload of cash back for the studios. So was this to be the new horror movement that defined a new decade? Some shaky-cams and people breathing heavily into the camera mic? I, for one, had hoped not, and yet there seemed to be no real alternative, as the cinemas of the mid 2000s and early 2010s were crowded with seemingly endless imitations, remakes, and sequels. For a while, I had some great hope for director Pascal Laugier and his film *Martyrs*, as well as his intensely intriguing follow-up, *The Tall Man*. But that was now over a decade ago, and without even knowing what Laugier has been up to lately, there's current talk of a *Martyrs* remake, something no horror fan, to my knowledge, even asked for.

But as we (and horror cinema) were heading into the new decade of the 2010s, finally I saw something that began to change my pessimistic view of new horror cinema: the Belgian neo-giallo *Amer*. This was a new independent/international genre film that got me really excited, and I dare say inspired, to delve back into what independent horror cinema was going to offer. Was there finally a true new wave of horror cinema to come to us? Alas, no. But, following the dazzling and

hallucinogenic nightmare that *Amer* was, we were then given British director Peter Strickland's own take on the Italian giallo and horror genre, the meta and cleverly understated *Berberian*

Sounds Studio, no less a hallucinogenic fever than its predecessor. Following these films, in 2014 and 2015 respectively, both sets of filmmakers gave us new films, showcasing their already-soaring talents – the mystery-horror giallo *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears* and the stunning S&M lesbian nightmare, *The Duke of Burgundy*.

It was after seeing a press screening of *The Duke of Burgundy* at the beginning of this year that I was finally fully inspired to explore the depths of some new, independent and international horror cinema (even though *The Duke of Burgundy* isn't really a horror film, it has its own nightmarish genre moments that allude to genre films of the seventies). I promptly began by ordering director Patricio Valladares' *Hidden in the Woods* from Amazon.ca, a DVD that had been released by a new and seemingly progressive genre label, Artsploitation Films. This Chilean cannibal inbred horror gore-a-thon blew me out of my seat, and after the movie finished I found myself literally hooked on trying to track down one great independent horrorshow after another. At times I was exuberantly successful, as with another of Artsploitations Films' newer Blu-ray releases, *Horsehead*, a stream-of-consciousness edgy nightmare horror film directed by Romain Basset, which happens to co-star Catriona MacColl (from Fulci's *The Beyond*); this Blu-ray was also distributed in Canada by Black Fawn Distribution, a relatively new up-and-coming Canadian genre distribution label, in a very limited numbered edition of 500 copies. On the



flipside, of course, some finds were not quite as mindblowing, although no less interesting, like Luciano Onetti's experimental neo-giallo *Sonno Profondo* (released on DVD by BRINKvision); and the micro-budgeted slasher film celebration, *Die Die Delta Pi*, which at least gleefully ticked all the boxes for its exploitation horror outing and boasted a catchy title, to boot. Last month, I also finally relented to the ongoing harassment by several friends and acquaintances to watch the 2013 horror hit *You're Next*, and while I did enjoy it, my reasons for doing so – mostly its stylistic relations to the works of the late, great literary horror master Richard Laymon – would have likely been lost on said friends and acquaintances. (By this time I gave up the last of my resistance to "new" horror movies and finally watched 2014's indie hit *It Follows* after a year of peer pressure

and harassment from pretty much everyone I knew). However, my personal enjoyment of Adam Wingard's *You're Next* then led me to check out a new film by producer Larry Fessenden and director Ted Geoghegan (who also wrote Timo Rose's 2007 backwoods bloodbath slasher indie cult flick *Barricade*); a surprisingly intense ghost/horror flick titled *We Are Still Here*. With this reinvigorated passion for indie horror films in my heart and on my mind, I soon took a chance on a very bizarre independent Italian horror film called *Morituris*, directed by Rafaele Picchio, which is a supernatural take on the Wes Craven cult classic *Last House on the Left*. *Morituris* is about a group of college-aged kids who find themselves running through the woods trying to get away from torturous, sadistic sexual predators. The sexual violence in this film is shockingly raw and brutal as hell, and really, you can't get a grip on any character you can warm up to in any way whatsoever – it's pretty clear that the filmmaker is pushing the audience to feel this way intentionally. The blood and rape and violence taking place then awakens some ancient warrior beasts who suddenly pose a far more direct threat of doom to the violent group of attackers and their already suffering victims alike. I can't say that *Morituris* is a likable movie at all, but you'd have to watch it right through to the last line of the closing credits to get the full impact of Picchio's undeniably well-made horror film. And it is a horror film, have no doubt. It was released just a few months ago on Blu-ray by Synapse Films, another great distribution company has never been afraid to pick up and distribute some rabidly oddball (and explicitly over-the-top) independent horror gems.

I had a chance to chat with Jerry Chandler, co-owner of Synapse Films, about the company's *Morituris* Blu-ray release, as well as about independent horror films in general – of which, Jerry tells me, *Worm* and *Asylum* have been two of his recent favourites. "What do I think of *Morituris*? I think it's a very cool movie," he said. "I'm not crazy about the misogyny. Usually, when I see things like that, it makes it more palatable to see

the victim get revenge by the end of the film. I didn't quite get that satisfaction, but I found the concept and film to be quite cool, nonetheless." He also gave us the scoop on an upcoming release Synapse Films happens to be extremely excited about, and it sounds like a true labour of love: "We have just completed the coolest movie we have ever done, and that is saying something! Check out our amazing Blu-ray edition of *Thundercrack*. We have just completed the five-year process of licensing and restoring the film."

The independent *Thundercrack* has gained a cult following in Europe and the UK over the last three decades, and for this film to finally see the light of day in North America is definitely amazing. Huge thanks to Jerry Chandler and Synapse Films!

So now, championing the new indie horror that I've had the good fortune to finally discover throughout 2015, the last thing I've put my



money towards in the closing weeks of this year – now directly at the midpoint through the 2010s decade – was a donation to the completion of an upcoming erotic horror-in-the-woods/ Lovecraftian indie flick called *Harvest Lake*, due for release from Forbidden Films sometime next year, which stars Ellie Church (Troma) and Vancouver's own Tristan Risk. I am keen on keeping my sights in the direction that these wild, kinetic films might be headed throughout 2016 and going on through the second half of this interesting decade.

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Going Coconuts with GoGo Goddess Lydia DeCarllo

By Billy Hopeless

Absolute Underground: So when did you first start dancing around naked in public? Was it scary, thrilling, empowering or just some really fun kid kick ?

Lydia DeCarllo: I started about five years ago. It was fun for sure! I liked the feeling of being backstage again, backstage feels like home to me. I knew something was happening for me when I got off stage after my first stripping performance, something made sense. I did one performance in Vancouver then ran off to Australia to cut my teeth there before returning back to Vancouver.

AU: Have you had any pro training or are you just self-taught or naturally talented?

LD: I am professionally trained, thank you for noticing. I am classically trained in Vaganova (Russian) Ballet, and various other styles of dance, contemporary/modern, jazz, traditional Irish dance, and I was also an accomplished figure skater. I started dancing when I was five years old, so that puts me at two decades of dance/showbiz. Not that this is a competition or anything, but just to give you scope. It's really the one thing I can do well.

AU: Another thing I dig about your performances is that you've embraced the whole Tiki culture with your ongoing GoGo Bungalow nights at one of Vancouver's coolest joints The Shameful Tiki Room, as well as your work with the Mondo Exotica nights at historic Waldorf Hotel Tiki Bar. What got you freaky for the tiki bongogo and bamboozie scene?

LD: Well, what's not to love about Tiki culture? Seriously delicious (and potent) cocktails, kitsch decor, awesome ties to surf and exotica music and who doesn't want to wear tropical prints while toting a mug of rum around?

I always loved it as a child, my great grandparents visited Hawaii often and I'd always see their midcentury mugs, aloha wear, beads, trinkets. My teeny brain couldn't understand it all then but as I grew up I found where it and I belonged. I wanted to share my love of vintage and Tiki culture and all things kitsch, so that includes it all... from burlesque to vintage tunes, retro gogo girls... All the while getting blasted on some wicked cocktails and encouraging people to lose themselves in the fantasy. It's straight-up relaxing. My little retro Tikiland is fun and open to absolutely everyone.

AU: Tell us your three all-time fave songs to shake it to at one of your nights!

LD: "Chop Chop Boom" - Jack McVea with Al Smith and the Savoy's *watch me bounce wiggle and shake to a silly song of utter nonsense*

"Primitive" - The Groupies *There are a lot of versions of this song... to me, this one feels the filthiest*

"Pussy Stank" - Andre Williams *I like this song, it's got a good quake, also mostly because I don't think the bar patrons realize he's saying "Pussy Stank" while I shimmy and shake like an earthquake with a sweet smile on my face*

AU: Speaking of music you've got one of my all-time fave Vancouver DJs, "The Swingin Creeper" working four you while your girls work it. How and why did you choose him to provide the soundtrack to your bump and grindhouse?



LD: He was the best option, I've known him for years. He is (as you know) a wonderful record nerd, and has just started up his own record label Rockin' Records, which I'm a big fan of. Nerdy and almost too knowledgeable, he's a Vancouver gem. Mondo Exotica actually has rotating DJs to keep things fresh, so I get a good variety as well. You've got to respect the dance party. Its sacred. The DJs I hire reflect that.

AU: Everyone fucks up every now and then, and we all love a good blooper reel. Do you have a fab flub moment that you look back on and laugh at that you can share with

us?

LD: Dancing with Southern Culture on the Skids in California and fully fell off the stage. Like that was it. I couldn't pretend I didn't. I just ate it.. There's a difference between falling down and falling down in a fringe bikini and gogo boots.

AU: Why should we come out to a gogo tiki night?

LD: Bros, metalheads, punks, goths, bikers and everyone in between, none are immune to the fun. I promise you a good time. You're all welcome to my paradise, relish in some kitsch history, relax and toss back some rum. There is something for everyone. See you soon! I'll be the one in the tassels... you can't miss me.

Mahalo!

www.lydiadecarllo.com

SHRED SESSION



Chi Pig

Interview by Malcolm Eric Hassin

Absolute Underground: Chi, where/when did you start skateboarding?

Chi Pig: I was about ten years old (1972), at the boys' club in Edmonton.

AU: What did you do in the winters there?

CP: Sniff glue and do bumper rides.

AU: Regular or goofy?

CP: Goofy.

AU: Favourite gear?

CP: We stole shit to get money and we'd order stuff from Val Surf, a California company. We couldn't wait to get that box. I remember one of the first ones: I met a guy that had a Logans Earth Skate, so I got one of those. Then I got a G&S Stacy Peralta, the original (solid) wood one. Then laminates came out, and we had it all. I got Tracker trucks and Road Rider 4's (wheels) and I was set.

AU: What's with Skull Skates?

CP: I met PD in Regina when he had the original shop named GNC (Great North Country).

AU: First ramp you skated?

CP: We made our own renegade bullshit. Outdoor skateparks were unheard of. We'd take a fuckin' 4x8 and put it up against a garbage can. That was our ramp for the day. We would scout out places that had slopes... I remember stealing a bunch of supplies and building my own ramp when I was 14.

AU: Did you skate much around Van?

CP: I skated Seylynn, China Creek and

other places when it wasn't raining. Edmonton was really hard to skateboard in 'cause it snows six months of the year. Every Sunday we would go to this parkade. There were no cars there, and it was smooth as hell. We would start at the fifth level, go all the way down, catch the elevator, go up, and do it all again, every Sunday. Then, skateboarding was a totally different animal. We did everything. We knew all the trails in the summer time and then hit up parkades in the winter time. We would also do freestyling and we learned every trick in the fuckin' book. Now people are limited to just one thing. Not with us; our minds were OPEN and very EXPANSIVE.

AU: Was SNFU into skating?

CP: That's how I met the Belke Brothers. Me and my brother were on a ski-shop team called "Skiers." Skiers had this fuckin' ramp right beside the shop. It was 12 feet wide and 16 feet high with four feet of vertical. It was fuckin' awesome, dude. That's how we learned. Skiers saw me and my little brother. We went and skated it and he was really impressed with our skills. He said, "I'm gonna start a team, uh, do you have any friends that skateboard?" Edmonton's south side had a place called Del-Mar's. Their team, which included the Belkes, were the ones that weren't good enough to get on the Skiers' team. We beat them every fuckin' time! Me and my little brother would go into contests with our precious skateboards tucked under our arms and they would fear us. They were like, "Oh my god! The Chinn brothers are here and we're gonna lose!" Sure enough, we'd get



first and second. Every god-damn time!

AU: We heard about a short film about skateboarding you made in Stanley Park?

CP: Pardon? Um, no... It was about sucking cock in Stanley Park. It wasn't about skateboarding at all. Two totally different things, man... yep...

AU: Anything else? Thank yous?

CP: PD, you, Andrew and anybody that had the frame of mind and took the time to care and support SNFU in whatever way. It's a vision: we're going to play hard music, fast, for people that live fast and don't mind hurting themselves. The music is designed and constructed specifically for skateboarders; renegade spirits. I'm just gonna go for it and build a soundtrack to that, and you know what? I think it's kinda worked, haha. Maybe? I dunno.

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In Ross' analysis of the character, Bruce Wayne is wonderfully complex. He constantly makes massive mistakes during his transformation. Just like the main hero from his previous shows, the success comes from those people who work with the protagonist that help him to succeed.

"If Bruce Wayne didn't have those people to get him back into the game continually, he wouldn't be in it at all. I think that's the similarity I see in each of those stories," noted Ross.

"And there's also getting to sink my teeth into all the

wonderful villain roles in the films."

In his performance, he will have to channel 25 different personas. The list includes Bane, Harvey Dent (Two Face), The Joker, Scarecrow and Selena Kyle.

He's teased at how the Clown Prince of Crime will sound, and it's not necessarily going to be exactly like Heath Ledger's, but close. He has a massive, but yet small, kind of voice, according to Ross. Additionally, Ledger may have breathed through his mouth, and may have smoked at the time. "I found that only when my voice is really warmed up, what I channel as The Joker is ragged," says Ross.

Unlike in his past shows, this performer realizes that he has to be careful in how the material is presented. "This show has a lot more of my material in it, and it's scary to try something new. I've put the pressure on myself to be at a certain level coming in, and it took a long time to get [One Man Star Wars and Lord of the Rings] to a place where I'm happy. I don't have the time to get the bugs out. I'm working on that now."

"You'll get to enjoy this show - warts and all. That's a good place to be at because sometimes we do need to learn how to fall flat on our faces. And, for me, hopefully not humiliate myself at the same time," grins Ross.

Show dates:

Nov 27 & 28, 2015
Intrepid Theatre
1609 Blanshard St #2
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Feb 18 -21, 2016
Waterfront Theatre
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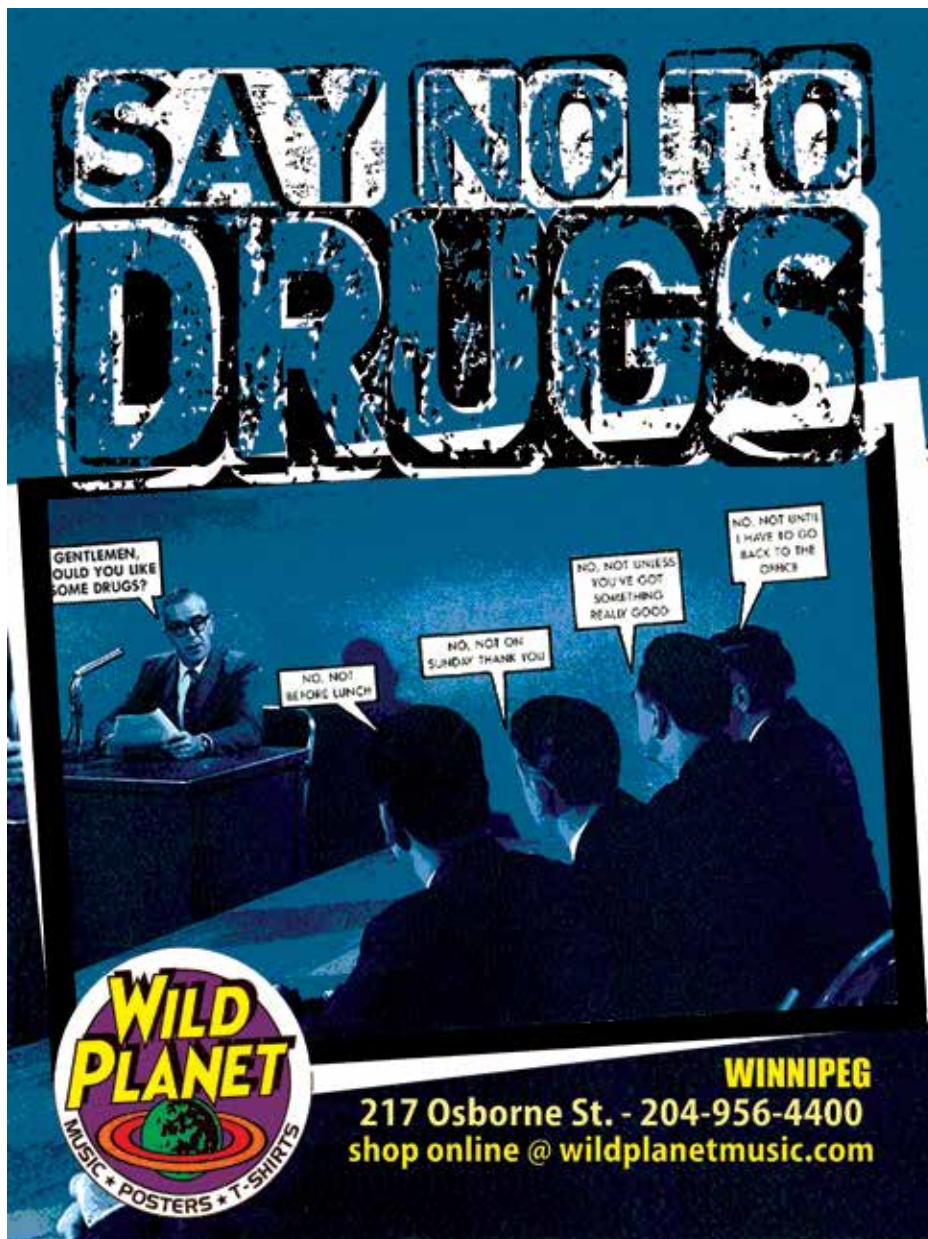
The One Man Dark Knight: A Batman Parody

By Ed Sum

Charles Ross, the one-man virtuoso of the *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* stage, has a new act! In *One Man Dark Knight: A Batman Parody*, he will be presenting his take on Christopher Nolan's trilogy into a reduced format that will play out for an hour. Trying to figure out what trilogy to tackle next was difficult for this accomplished performer. Ross says, "It took a lot of time to figure out what I wanted to do as my next show. I wanted to find another *Star Wars* / *Lord of the Rings*-type of film to adapt, and Nolan's take on *Batman* was the only one that for me — pound for pound — I was really happy with."

One Man Dark Knight began its genesis during March of this year, and Ross presented its early version in Charleston, South Carolina last May. He also tested it with audiences in Winnipeg as a one-off. In Victoria, BC, this performance is part of Intrepid Theatre's Fundraiser for the Arts. Future shows include a presentation at the Waterfront Theatre in Vancouver, with more bookings planned in the future, including a run at the famous Birchmere Music Hall, located in Alexandria, Virginia.

Ross reveals that Bruce Wayne has to vest himself with this power before he can truly be the Batman. "He has to become a street urchin. That's the tact the [first] film takes," said Ross, "He arrives at Ra's al Ghul lair in the mountains, barely able to stand up for himself. He has nothing more than a flower and his need for — in his mind — revenge to strike fear into the hearts of criminals."



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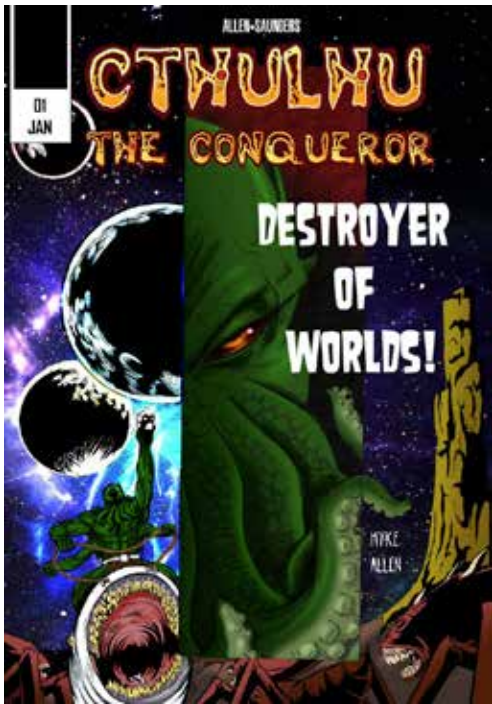
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Kickstarting the Cthulhu the Conqueror Comic Revolution

By Ed Sum

Cthulhu is a creation that's getting a *Sword of Conan*-style resurrection by creators Myke Allen and Steven Saunders in a crowdfunding campaign to get a digital comic created. These two informally met at a local festival, introduced by their mutual partners, and hit it off quite well because of their common interests in fantastic literature. Saunders was editing for an e-magazine called *The Uninvited* at the time and needed an artist for a few stories. Allen was quick on the draw, and from then on, they both realized they

enjoyed working together.

"Steve's interest is in dark noir and I was used to drawing supers. It was a fun transition for me to build darker scenes, to develop harrowing stories. Steve sent me to the whitechapel message board where I came up with the concept [of *Cthulhu the Conqueror*]," said Allen.

This artist has been illustrating since he was 12, and was introduced into the horror genre with *Werewolf by Night*. His formal training in digital art took place at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, and he has freelanced ever since graduating. Allen's work appeared in the comic, *Degrassi: The Next Generation Extra Credit*, and he helped design Gary Bloom's *Red Lance*, also a Kickstarter comic. His job also includes graphic design, creating posters for bands and work for groups like BC Girls Rock, Hank Pine & Lily Fawn and DJ Anger. Examples of his work can be found online at www.mykeallen.wix.com/graphicallyll

Part of Allen's joy in creating comics is in what he sets to colour. "I personally don't think I'm the greatest at it, but I guess that's why I spend so much time doing it," said Allen. "I have the most fun inking, but I feel that there are elements of an image that just can't be seen until you add colour. Sketching is free and fast. Colouring is 'game time.'"

Saunders' résumé, for his part, is a hundred miles long! He's worked the independent comics scene as an editor and writer, has his own role-playing game imprint, Black Goat Games, and to top off all that, he's also a musician. From playing a recorder when he was young, to DJ-ing in his young adult years, he's learned the business well, also serving a long run in Seattle as a booking and promotions agent for local metal bands.

"A lot of my work can be found on www.baconlich.com, which is my personal website that's full of links. My music can be heard at mrzoth.bandcamp.com," says Saunders.

This jack-of-all-trades will provide a soundtrack as one of the stretch goals for *Cthulhu the Conqueror*! Not many comic books come with a digital music download to set the mood as they're being read. In a pulp action adventure story that sees The

Mighty One rampaging through several realms, this added bonus will make the experience like watching a movie. Cthulhu was once unleashed to deal with the "True Old Ones," and gets exiled into the Nether, to sleep until needed again. However, unlike Sekhmet of Egyptian lore in the Story of Re, whose blood lust was never sated, even though both figures were sent out for a purpose; both had to be calmed down. The cat got drunk and Cthulhu, well... He escaped his story banishment and he's looking for answers. Who manipulated him? What does the Hindu courtesan Kali, a figure of Death, have to do with this tale?

"Kali is more of an equal among lesser beings in Cthulhu's eyes," said Allen. "Savagery is their common thread but it's openly known in regard to both. Theirs is a relationship of mutual respect built on blood; their hearts are an adjoining set of graveyards."

"Cthulhu and Kali's love isn't really covered too much in Cthulhu the Conqueror. When the story begins, the love affair between Cthulhu and Kali is already in the past. It's a mystery as to whether Kali knew about Cthulhu's exile when the gods were planning to trick him into the Nether Realm. The way their love story finally ends will give large hints as to what her motivations might have been. I'll be up front: their story is Shakespearian/Sophoclean on the tragedy scale. I actually teared up writing it all out," revealed Saunders.

Cthulhu's journey is to travel through all the realms from various mythological pantheons to find answers. Allen says the comic's focus is to look at the holistic connections between the deities and the relationships they share with each other, not just with their worshippers or subjects. Both Allen and Saunders will function as a writing team to decide on what to feature. They may dive into some very obscure bits of lore to keep the roster fresh and surprising.

Saunders said that he simply couldn't include every pantheon of gods or spiritual creatures from every world culture. While they would like to, that would take a lot of time researching and discovering. Not many people are going to be aware of some mythical figures referenced.

Comic-geekdon

"They're only obscure if you're not a Dungeons & Dragons fan (Orcus, punisher and underworld god from Roman myth, for instance)," laughed Saunders.

"I like to note that we're also trying to be as respectful as possible, without compromising our creative vision. Mythology/religion is important to a lot of people, whether it be part of their culture, their keen interests, or personal belief. We don't want to just crap all over that for shock value and cheap thrills. Naturally, one's mileage always varies," noted this co-author.

As for fans of H.P. Lovecraft, they will enjoy what this creative team will offer from his world.

"We definitely have a pile of Old Ones, Shapeless Ones and creatures from before to show you. It wouldn't be Lovecraft without some monsters to play around with! Yog-sothoth will most definitely attend!" grinned Allen.

Even if the Kickstarter project does not succeed, Allen reveals that they will pitch the idea to publishers like Boom! (current publishers of Cthulhu-related works). It's a project the two are excited about getting off the ground. It'll get out there for the masses. Saunders says that they will relaunch the project, but have a smaller set of goals in mind, like going strictly digital.


"That's just one option. We're not giving up just because our first *Cthulhu the Conqueror* Kickstarter campaign doesn't succeed!" said Saunders.

To back this project, visit

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/baconlich/cthulhu-the-conqueror-a-graphic-novel>

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Toxic Avenger the Musical

Ring in the New Year!

By Ed Sum

The team of Last Chance Productions has a new musical to ring in the holidays; *Toxic Avenger the Musical* leads the charge. Instead of Santa, we will see Toxie going, “Ho! Ho! Ho!” and Rudolf the Radioactive Red-Nosed Reindeer ringing those sleigh bells. In the past, this group has performed *Young Frankenstein*, *Evil Dead* and *Cannibal! the Musical*.

Fans of Troma who have not seen this production can see what’s changed - while the plot of this stage version does not entirely follow the film, it takes the best moments from it, and has fun with the tropes. “The movie has its own cult following, and people should be aware that the musical changed things around,” revealed Chance Newman, director and producer. “There’s two performers who play 20 parts each, and it’s going to be manic.”

One of the songs performed is the self-referential “Bitch/Slut/Liar/Whore,” and will certainly have audiences do a double-take. The actress is having

a battle with herself in a duet. Stevie Wayne plays the mayor and mother to Toxie in the same scene, and Newman believes this moment will be outrageously funny. This show also features the talents of Sebastian Haff as Melvin Ferd/Toxie Avenger; Stacey Dee as Sarah; Collin Claypool as random dudes and Deb Lundy for the rest of the gang.

This group saw this production when they were in Houston, Texas at the Alley Theatre, and decided that this had to be the next show they put together. While they never tire of playing their small repertoire of shows, figuring out which horror-musical to do next is always good. The team has been avid followers of this musical since 2011, and of Troma’s film for even longer.

Newman’s ensemble cast knows their material inside-out, and this director knows his team is very well-versed in making the magic happen. They can all multitask; the only character who does not play a dual role is Sarah, the heroine.

With Newman’s experience in putting on haunted house attractions during the Halloween season, moving the intimacy from a hands-on experience to that of a stage show makes no difference; he says the experience is the same. With his background added on top of his knowledge of the horror genre from film studies and in helping his mother out in her musical productions back home, moving onwards and upwards to produce live performances is evolution in action.

“I think that the music [from *Toxic Avenger the Musical*] is outstanding, and when we find ourselves singing these songs for three years running, that’s incredibly satisfying when you know that you can share that with other people,” said Newman. “To see them hear it for the first time is a joy.

“I’m a big superhero fan, like so many folks are. The idea of Frankenstein’s monster as a Jason (*Friday the 13th*) kind of character slammed into a superhero form is pretty fun,” he says.

Joe DiPietro wrote the original Broadway production, and David Bryan composed the music, which Newman describes as having that New Jersey (Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen) sound. For instance, there’s this folk singer that

will come in, playing the acoustic guitar, and he has a loud voice to pull off being The Boss when he sings, “The Legend of the Toxic Avenger.”

With only five members in this cast, they have the chops to pull off different kinds of harmonies and, with the many costume changes in store to play bit parts, this producer promises that this show will be very fast-paced. The performers will race in and out of the stage to deliver one-line bits, and any mix-up will be intentional. It may have the same manic pace as the Reduced Shakespeare Company plays when they blaze through the lines in less than a minute.

“In my opinion, that’s where the fun is,” said Newman. “There’s a lot to take in because it’s moving so quickly. It’s melodramatic. The interaction of the characters as they switch between various costumes is a special effect in itself.”

This team also created many of the props and prosthetics that make up the set. This includes the toxic waste barrels (Newman did not mention if they will glow or not, but it’s a safe bet they will), which will comprise most of the set, and are how the hero transforms. Everything’s made from the ground up, and it’s more movie-like than simply made items that may not be transportable when this show hits the road. He promises that there will be cool lighting and fog effects to thrill audiences.

“I love the look and feel that’s presented in the old horror films of Universal’s, they are my favourite. All the splatter stuff of the 80s was also a very big thing to me,” admitted Newman, who graduated with a degree in Film Studies.

“We wanted something that’s a bit more closer to the film,” he noted, “We are all fans of the film and wanted to be respectful to that. We didn’t change this production much. That happens from time to time when, for whatever reason, you realize you don’t have the right tools to pull off that effect. For example, *Young Frankenstein* is so perfect in the way it’s put together. We had some debate over the line, ‘Flying down to Rio’ or when the Monster tried to get into a charades game. Those bits got the biggest laughs because that’s how Mel Brooks wrote it. We pretty much stick with

what we saw.

“However, the original version on Broadway was a one-act play. Ours is a two-act version and there are a couple of new songs. There’s a James Bond-style diddly called “Disappointment,” and another that’s a Villager March-style song called “Till the Monster’s Dead.” They’re nice additions,” revealed Newman.

These changes may have been installed to reflect more of the film’s narrative, and fans will, no doubt, welcome them. Lloyd Kaufman, the creator of *Toxic Avenger*, approves. Other productions have even brought him out to present the show or attend the dress rehearsals. But that can only happen if the theatre troupe has the budget. “They invited me to Oahu, Hawaii; Toronto, Ontario and Houston, Texas,” said Kaufman. Newman probably missed meeting Kaufman opening night, and to imagine them working together can only mean spectacular mutations can occur. The cheerleader for Troma Entertainment appreciates the fact that his creations are engrained in pop culture in different ways.

“This show has been played in about 15 cities now, and I’m happy to hear it’s coming to the Pacific Northwest. I wish this crew the best,” smiled Kaufman.

Catch Toxic Avenger The Musical at the following locations:

Dec 26, 2015

Renton Civic Theatre, Renton, WA

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